

MIDNIGHT MYSTERY STORIES

January 13, 1923

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A MACFADDEN
PUBLICATION

The Menace

Tricked

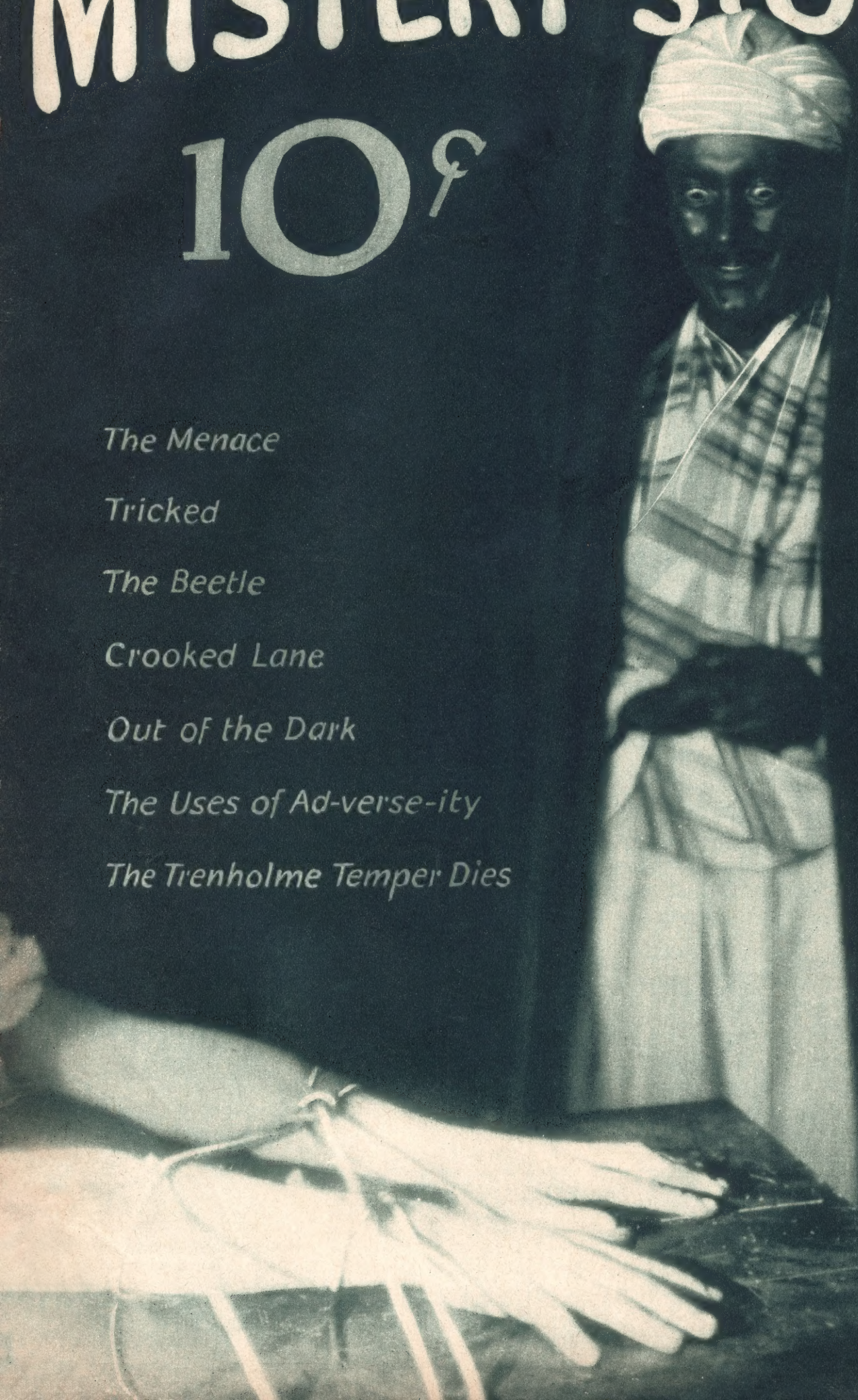
The Beetle

Crooked Lane

Out of the Dark

The Uses of Ad-verse-ity

The Trenholme Temper Dies



What One Reader Thinks.

The following is a letter we have just received from one of our readers. It speaks for itself.

Knoxville, Tenn.

My dear Editor:

It is beyond my technique in the use of words to describe, or attempt to describe, the abundant pleasure which I derive in perusing the pages of your weekly magazine, "Midnight."

Ever since I studied Edgar Allan Poe, and Robert Louis Stevenson, I have had an insatiable appetite for stories of the character produced by the above-mentioned authors. While in high school Nathaniel Hawthorne's works afforded me no little pleasure.

I am an exorbitant magazine reader—and generally read good magazines of quality. But, never have I found upon the magazine stands of the stores a magazine that came so near publishing stories of the same quality or character as Poe, Stevenson and Hawthorne.

My recent experience in news-reporting for two of Knoxville's leading newspapers has given me a sense of good magazine stories. And may one who is an ardent student of good literature, of journalism, and a wide magazine reader, be permitted to extend his most hearty and sincere congratulations upon the splendid "Midnight" magazine.

In the "Midnight" magazine I adventure with notorious, murderers, forgers, robbers, embezzlers, highwaymen, swindlers, counterfeiters, moonshiners, revolutionists, and smugglers. And then I end my adventure with them as I see them face the stern bar of justice. And down in my heart there beats a pride for the praise-worthy way in which this magazine upholds the milky-white banner of justice and purity even in its stories of crimes and disappointed love tragedies.

In last week's issue I was particularly enraptured in enthusiasm with "The Fatepur Emerald." In my imagination I took a journey far-away from the workaday world of the West to the dazzling, luxurious East, in the reading of this story. I was in a land of romance and adventure, where shadowy, brown and yellow men and little, beautiful women, with little hands like marigold flowers, love, quarrel and worship amid scenes of mingled squalor and splendor. I saw it all in this fascinating story.

Next week and each succeeding week, I expect to take similar journeys thru the entertaining stories of this weekly.

Here's to one of the best magazines that was ever produced from a printer's press. I'm wishing it greater success and prosperity, and popularity, in the coming year than it has enjoyed in the past one.

I have the esteemed honor of remaining,

Very truly yours,

G. L. E.



Next Week

We are glad to announce that we will begin the publication of a remarkable serial by Herbert Coryell. **GARBED IN GREEN** is the title of it, and we are going to give it to you in four generous installments. Robin Stage has written another one of his famous Dr. Blitz yarns, entitled **ONE MOMENT WAS ENOUGH**, which will give you the thrill of your life. **THUN-BOLT**, by H. Child is another tale that will hold you to the last gasp, and you will get a thrill and several chuckles out of Lyon Mearson's **THE RULES OF SPORTSMANSHIP**.

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Illustrations for this week were posed by the following cast: Miss June Ferguson, Miss Mildred Walker, Carl Hayes, Milton L. Silver, Steve Lawson, Henry Van Bousen, Ralph Moreau, Leo J. Timmans, Scott McGee, Gordon Marr, Charles Hancock and Willard Cooley—to whom grateful acknowledgement is made.

Next Week

We have a surprise for you soon: **BURIED ALIVE**, by Arthur H. Howland, being the inside story of the famous Becker murder case that is just now agitating and astounding the civilized world. It is a story that illustrates how closely fact parallels fiction. **THE MYSTERY CLOSET**, by Jack Hanley is certain to raise your hair, and Blanche Goodman, in **HIS CODE**, has written a little masterpiece. Also, the conclusion of **MIDNIGHT DOLLARS**, and **CROOKED LANE**, to say nothing of Thurston, Madame Pythagoras and Heart Throbs. A number we are proud of.

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JANUARY
Thirteenth
1923MIDNIGHT
MYSTERY STORIESVOLUME 2
WHOLE
NUMBER 21

Out of the Dark

by JAMES WILMER

"Huh!" he remarked, "a woman's shoes—I wonder if she'll be back after them"



He snatched a flashlight—
instantly a blurred, dark
streak darted across the
beam of light



SAILOR JACK DANBY lumbered heavily up the steep, narrow stairs and bumped his clumsy seaman's chest through the doorway into the middle of the newly rented furnished room.

"There!" he muttered, swathing his face and neck with a big handkerchief. It had been a hot climb up those stairs in the dingy, stuffy old house on that July afternoon.

He reached for a wallet in his hip pocket and fingered out four soiled one-dollar bills.

"Here's your rent," he said, handing the money to the bleary-eyed, gray-whiskered old man in baggy trousers and a faded blue shirt.

"You're getting south windows, and them catches the breeze," said the landlord. He pocketed the money and shuffled away down the hall, leaving Sailor Jack mopping his face and surveying the premises.

The air was ripe with odors of an Italian fruit store on the ground floor of the building. There were cantaloupes, watermelons, oranges and bananas. Noises common to that ancient quarter of the metropolis in the vicinity of Grove Street, Bleeker Street and Seventh Avenue came through the windows. About a block down the street a hurdy-gurdy was grinding out a jazz medley.

The sailor sniffed and looked about and listened. He pulled his sea chest over into the corner of the room.

Up and down the teeming, sunlit street he gazed from each of his two windows. Then he examined the dusty, cracked porcelain bric-a-brac on the mantle. He peered into the wooden, built-out clothes closet in a corner. "Huh!" he remarked, "a

In this story is the atmosphere of the East Side. Sailor Jack got a thrill there—so will you

woman's shoes—I wonder if she'll be back after them." He lifted up an end of the mattress of his bed, inspecting its condition of cleanliness.

After he had thus become familiar with his new quarters, he poured out some water from a cracked pitcher on the dirty marble-top washstand into the huge porcelain basin and sputtered over it. Washed, he took a seat in a squeaky straw-bottom chair. He heard a step in the dark hall and looked around. In the doorway stood an old woman.

"Howdy!" said the sailor. She smiled a greeting. But Sailor Jack noted more than cordiality in the smile. It was either resentment or fear which strained the muscles of her pale cheeks.

"I'm Mrs. Sage," she said. "We're neighbors. It's so hot I have to keep my door open, and guess you'll have to do the same. It's the hottest house I ever lived in."

"I don't mind heat," said Jack. "Got used to it in the tropics. Won't be here long anyway—just

ashore for a few weeks—my ship's in drydock."

"There's been other sailors in this room. The last man here was a sailor." Mrs. Sage seemed to hesitate about something which she seemed to want to tell. After a long pause, she lowered her voice to a husky, frightened whisper. "But that sailor was took out of here dead!"

(Concluded on page 28)

The Menace

"SIR Oliver Haultain!"

The old aristocrat tugged, with apparent stupidity, at his white moustache before staring vacantly through his monocle at the servant who had announced him. There was no offence in the old man's stare. It seemed to be done with such lack of intention—almost with the artlessness of a child. The same thing had occurred with the door-man and with the man who had taken his hat and stick. Something about these rather large servants seemed to draw that meaningless stare through the monocle.

As Sir Oliver advanced into the dark-paneled library a man rose from a deep-seated chair and came forward with quick steps which were in strong contrast with the slow progress of the visitor. He was, perhaps, ten years younger than Sir Oliver and there was yet much black in his hair. Beside a tall stand-lamp he halted and the light played upon the keen and alert features of the American business man.

"I am Van Duysen," said the younger man with hand partly extended.

"Ah, yes," answered Sir Oliver, sinking into a chair and taking the glass from his eye in order to polish it.

Sir Oliver had not ignored the hand. He had simply attended to his eye-glass as if that were the most important thing in the world. Sir Oliver was the kind of a man who might strike but who would never stoop to offend. That would be beneath his dignity, and people, upon meeting him, soon recognized this. Van Duysen sensed it at once, as he drew up a chair, and an expression of studious

The desks had been broken and a typewriter lay smashed on the floor—on a small table sat a girl. Squatting on the floor was a young boy whose tousled head of red hair drooped sleepily



By

R.T.M. SCOTT



"They are—ah—professional guards," explained Sir Oliver

Dangerous anarchists have obtained possession of a flask of deadly poison that would kill every inhabitant of New York if the cork was pulled.

Read what the best Secret Service operatives of two continents find at the end of the trail

interest spread over his rather handsome features. "Cormorand has not arrived yet," said Van Duysen. "He invited me to meet you tonight after dinner but a few minutes ago he telephoned that he would be late and asked me to entertain you in his library until he comes."

"Coffee, sir?"

Sir Oliver took the fragile cup and again he stared in a bored way at the servant who held the tray. He neither refused nor accepted the cream and sugar but seemed merely to forget the servant as he raised the cup to his lips.

"I think," continued Van Duysen, "that our host is rather upset over the hold-up which occurred here last night."

"Hold-up?" questioned Sir Oliver. "I did not know. Came straight from the boat. That accounts for the—ah—servants?"

"Servants?" asked Van Duysen, puzzled.

"They are not—ah—real servants," explained Sir Oliver, pulling at his moustache. "They are—ah—professional guards."

"Oh!" laughed the American. "You saw that so

quickly? It is a common practice—almost necessary—among men in this country who deal in a certain kind of politics. This place is a fortress and that makes last night's hold-up almost inexplicable."

"Thief caught? Anything stolen?" queried Sir Oliver.

"Nothing stolen and no thief caught," returned Van Duysen. "The man came boldly in and was mistaken for a guest at a large dinner party. He handed his coat and hat to a servant and immediately requested the use of a telephone which would give him privacy. He was directed to a small room at the head of the stairs. Almost at once a wild call of 'Fire!' came from upstairs."

"Cormorand, with some guests and servants, ran to the scene of the alarm. Cormorand went straight to a private study. A servant who tried to follow found the door locked and it took five minutes to

Framed in the doorway was the towering figure of a huge Hindu



break in. The supposed guest, who had asked for the telephone, amid the confusion of entering the locked room, rushed down stairs and out the front door calling excitedly for a doctor.

"Cormorand was found upon the floor, tied and gagged. He states that he was attacked by a tall man wearing a mask and that this man must have stood against the wall and slipped out as the crowd rushed in. Cormorand refuses to talk about the incident except to state that nothing was stolen. Of course there was no fire and the thing is a mystery."

THE heavy portieres parted and a short man of about fifty entered the library. His face showed fatigue and a slight twitching of the mouth gave an indication of nervousness. His eyes were deep brown—almost black—and denoted power and the desire for more and more power.

"Mr. Cormorand," said Van Duysen, rising, "this is Sir Oliver Haultain."

As the three men settled into their chairs, Cormorand came straight to the point.

"You come from the British Government, Sir Oliver?"

"Really, my dear sir," was the quiet reply, "if I came from the British Government I would deal with Washington and not with a private individual."

"Then what is your exact status?" demanded Cormorand.

"I am the London partner of Haultain and Smith," answered Sir Oliver, "just as Aurelius Smith is the New York partner of Smith and Haultain. We are not incorporated but work together on international cases. Smith wandered to India when I was in charge of the Criminal Intelligence Department of that country. He entered the service of that department for a number of years although retaining his American nationality. When I retired he returned to New York and I went to London but neither of us seemed able to give up the fascination of criminal investigation."

"And, now that you are here, what do you propose to do?" snapped Cormorand.

"I came to America to take the poison-flask back to England."

"Humph!"

Sir Oliver screwed his monocle more tightly into his eye and leaned toward his companion while he walked with absence of emotion but with sincerity of expression upon his old and somewhat yellowed face.

"Let us view the situation," he began. "At one point in the war the Allies were in a most desperate situation. So desperate were they that a certain sealed flask of vitiating poison—effective through the ether—was taken from the vaults of the Bank of England and carried to the battlefields of Europe as a last and ghastly resource."

"This poison was created by a great scientist, who is now dead, and was destined as a national defence to be used only when all other means failed. Its action is through the ether and a single flask of it will destroy, almost instantly, all life over a space of a hundred square miles. With the death of the scientist the secret of this poison died also. One flask remained in existence but it could never be analyzed since the man who opened the flask would die together with every other living thing within many miles."

"The poison was not used because the United States entered the war in time to save the world. The poison was, however, stolen before it could be returned to the vaults where it had been kept. The disappearance of this dangerous flask has remained a mystery until a few weeks ago when Aurelius Smith sent me a photograph of the flask and stated that the flask itself was in the possession of an unknown Bolshevik agent in New York City. I have shown the photograph to certain English officials who remember the original flask and—"

"Is it genuine?" demanded Cormorand and Van Duysen in one voice.

"It is undoubtedly genuine."

Van Duysen swore softly and paced the room, an expression of pain upon his face.

"I UNDERSTAND, Mr. Cormorand," continued Sir Oliver, "that Mr. Van Duysen gave this photograph to Aurelius Smith and engaged his services. I understand, also, that Mr. Van Duysen received this photograph from you and that it came to you anonymously. With it came a demand that the business interests of this country must support a Bolshevik ticket at the next elections. The flask will be broken, if they fail to do so, and every man, woman and child in New York City will die. Am I correct?"

"Damnably!" ejaculated Van Duysen.

"But correct," added Cormorand.

"What can be done?" asked Van Duysen, rising again to pace the floor in agitation.

"We cannot sacrifice millions of our citizens," spoke up Cormorand. "There is only one thing to be done. We must do as they demand and try to get the flask back before they wreck the country."

"There is something else," said Sir Oliver, leaning back languidly in his chair.

"What is that?" asked Van Duysen, halting with knit brows before the old man.

"I shall take the flask back to England on the next boat."

"How are you going to get it?" barked Cormorand.

"I have great faith in Aurelius Smith," went on Sir Oliver. "In addition to his work in India he performed wonders in Europe during the war—wonders which may never be told to the public. His record with Scotland Yard is unsurpassed. He is an American through and through but he knows crime in many countries. He—ah—interviewed you, Mr. Cormorand?"

"I gave him an interview," answered Cormorand. "He did not appear to be very intelligent and did not seem very much interested. I think you overrate this man. He is not the kind to succeed where my own agents and the police have failed."

Here's your chance—

"Every one who guesses what's in the author's mind may file his application for a place with the Secret Service in the United States, or Scotland Yard in England."—Sir Oliver Haultain

"Then you have employed the police?" queried Sir Oliver rather sharply.

"Well, not definitely," responded Cormorand after a slight hesitation. "There would be a panic if this thing got into the papers. I have used influence to have certain radicals rounded up and searched—nothing more. My own private agents, however, are hard at work and, where they fail, your man Smith will never succeed."

"And yet"—Sir Oliver's long fingers played with his moustache and wandered in a helpless way to his monocle—"I received a wireless on the boat this morning stating that he had succeeded and that he would give me the flask if I called this evening."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Van Duysen, striking his hands together with enthusiasm. "Let's go and get it at once—that is, if I may come along."

"Sorry to disappoint you," broke in Cormorand, "but Smith has been missing for twelve hours. In addition to the entire police force I have half a hundred special agents searching for him. When my men can't find anybody it is fairly certain that the missing person is both dead and mighty cleverly planned."

"Why—why didn't you—ah—tell me this sooner?" falteringly questioned Sir Oliver with a look of dismay.

"Why didn't you tell me at first that Smith had secured the flask?" countered Cormorand.

"True," murmured the old man absent-mindedly as he held out his coffee cup. "I am getting old. May I have some more coffee? My thoughts wander."

"Why not pay a visit to Smith's diggings?" suggested Van Duysen as Cormorand rang for a servant. "Let's get some action. Order your car around, Cormorand."

SO it was that, at about ten o'clock, Cormorand's luxurious limousine turned from the bright lights of Broadway, in the lower eighties, and stopped before a quiet apartment house. As the chauffeur brought the car to a halt, a second servant sprang lightly from the front seat and held the door open. Sir Oliver, the last of the three men to alight, again stared with owl-like curiosity at the man who held the door. From the innocent expression on the old man's face it was impossible to guess that he recognized the servant as the same one who had taken his hat and cane at Cormorand's residence.

"Never can tell what you will find in the dug-out of a chap like Smith," muttered Sir Oliver as he stepped from the car. "Uncommon name for uncommon man."

The next moment he tripped and nearly fell over a legless beggar who was trundling himself along the sidewalk on a low box mounted on castors.

"I say, my man, you should be more careful," grumbled Sir Oliver in an irritable voice. Then, with more kindness: "Hurt in the war?"

There was no reply and Sir Oliver, after one of his vacant stares, dropped a piece of silver among the pencils in the ragged hat and followed his companions into the building.

The man who had opened the limousine door joined the party in the elevator. Sir Oliver stared at him anew as if he had not already seen him on the sidewalk. He quickly turned his attention, however, to the elevator boy—or rather man—as they shot upward to the top floor and came to an abrupt halt two feet too high. The car descended and stopped with a jerk three feet below the level of the floor. When it finally came to rest, a good six inches too high, Sir Oliver turned to Cormorand.

"Better leave your two guards outside and let 'em learn to run the lift," he suggested.

"What makes you think they are both my men?" demanded Cormorand sharply.

"Saw that they knew each other and they are both—ah—what you call gangsters," returned Sir Oliver coolly. "This one doesn't know a lift from a submarine."

Van Duysen hid a faint smile behind a gloved hand but Cormorand flushed with annoyance.

"Gangster is not a very polite word to use," he said, "but—you don't understand things in this country. I always keep one man with me. Come along Jennings."

It was Sir Oliver who pressed the buzzer outside the door of Smith's apartment. A shrill voice called something from within and light feet could be heard scampering across the floor. The next moment a guttural voice broke out and the feet stopped their patter. There was complete silence.

Suddenly, without the slightest warning, the door opened to its fullest extent. Framed in the doorway was the towering figure of a huge Hindu dressed in the flowing white of the native servant of India. His high turban, wonderfully wrapped, nearly touched the top of the doorway.

"Kaisa ho?" said Sir Oliver which is a polite question regarding the health.

The native's dark eyes opened to their widest and an expression of happy astonishment spread over his face.

"Ram! Ram!" he exclaimed, abbreviating the name of his god in his surprise.

Majestically the tall figure bent in a salaam and the hands flew to the forehead. There followed a torrent of Hindustani which Sir Oliver cut short.

"Speak English," the old man said. "We have much to do, Langa Doonh, and there is little time."

INSIDE the apartment the visitors found themselves in a large square room which had all the appearance of having been wrecked. The desks had been broken open and a typewriter lay smashed upon the floor. Pictures had been torn from the walls and a table lay upon its side. It was evident that a violent search of the room had recently been made. Only a rectangular aquarium seemed to be untouched as it hung from a wall bracket. Three gold fish swam unconcernedly within.

But the wrecked furniture was not all that the room held. On a small table, upon which rested her slender arms, sat a girl with her chin in her hands. Squatting on the floor, was a young boy whose tousled head of red hair drooped sleepily toward the table leg. Dark rings were under the girl's eyes and it was plain that she was in sad need of sleep. The boy's face was puckered in an effort to keep himself awake while he gazed at the visitors like a terrier that is undecided between friends and foes. The girl's face, delicate with an aristocratic beauty, held eyes in whose dark-brown depths there burned a zeal which defied sleep. Langa Doonh, once more impassive, stood straight and silent with his eyes fixed upon Sir Oliver.

"Coffee."

The silence was broken by the single word from Sir Oliver and the native vanished like a shadow into the next room, his bare feet making no noise upon the floor.

"Who are you?" suddenly demanded the girl, rising to her feet while the boy jumped up and took a step forward as if the terrier in him had decided to fight.

(Concluded on page 30)

Tricked

BY GEORGE B. JENKINS

THERE was a sharp flash in the darkness, and the deafening report of a revolver crashed into the silence of the hallway. For a fraction of a second, the two men who were about to descend the stairs stood motionless. Then, in desperate, frantic haste, they fled to the floor below.

Like frightened rats they scurried across a wide hall, turned abruptly to the left through an open door, and crowded out of a tall French window to the lawn outside. Andrews was in the lead, with Benton close behind him. The cool fresh air of a quiet night swallowed them up.

Andrews spurred across the lawn, making for the shadow of a towering hedge. Again a revolver crashed on the second floor of the huge country home. A bullet whimpered past his head, and then a shot was fired at Benton as he darted in another direction. Andrews plunged toward the automobile that had brought them to the vicinity of Howard Van Wert's country dwelling.

Lights appeared on every floor of the building behind him. Guests awoke and rushed out, startled by the shots. Andrews knew that a search would shortly be made and he ran, lungs aching, knees paining, feet burning. He came to a high wall, topped with sharp-edged glass, and he flung himself upon it, ignoring cuts on his hands and torn clothes.

There was the car, by the side of the road, just as it had been left. It was concealed by the shadows of overhanging trees. Andrews snatched open the door and slipped behind the wheel. Before he stepped upon the self-starter he paused, listening intently.

The faint noises of the night were marred by shouts and the sounds of hurrying feet. Pursuit had begun—Benton, Andrews' pal in this criminal adventure, had not appeared. Andrews was waiting for him until the last moment.

They had been interrupted just after the safe had yielded to their skillful persuadings. A firm foot-step had sounded in the hall. A whisper in the dark, and both Andrews and Benton had frozen motionless. Then, when the man had entered the room and begun fumbling for the electric-light switch, Andrews had felt Benton's hand upon his arm. Moving soundlessly, the two interlopers had gained the hallway, and had been upon the verge of slipping down the stairs when the other man had fired.

There was no need for Andrews to wait longer. If Benton was going to join him, he would have appeared before now. There were voices on the other side of the wall. The sounds were undoubtedly made by people who rightfully belonged on the Van Wert's grounds, for Benton would not have been so carelessly noisy.

The motor whirled and caught, and Andrews drove away. He did not race with a roaring motor; his car rolled along at a moderate pace so as not to arouse suspicion as it passed through the nearest village and took the straight road for New York City.

Andrews drew his rubber gloves from his hands and stuck them into the side pocket on the car door. He stopped the machine, when safe from pursuit, and changed the soft-soled shoes he was wearing for oxfords.

Arriving in New York, he drove his car to a garage. He was not wholly disappointed by his evening's work. True, he had not brought anything away from that magnificent country place, but he knew Benton had snatched something from the safe in that second of opportunity before they were interrupted.

II

THE morning papers played-up the robbery. Scareheads across the front page of a yellow sheet, announced:

"Princess' Pearls Purloined

Jewels Valued at a Million Escape Robbers.
Frightened Away by Millionaire!"

Then followed a report of the visit of criminals to

*After a thrill
comes a shudder—
visit a doctor if
you don't gasp in
this story*

the country house of the exclusive Howard Van Werts, and the statement that a pearl necklace, valued at twenty-five thousand dollars was all the loot that had been taken. Much was made of the fact that had not the thieves been surprised at their work many famous and valuable jewels would have been taken.

Andrews smiled wryly. Still, the string of pearls, valued according to the newspaper report at twenty-five thousand, was a rich haul. His share of the proceeds would enable him to loaf for some weeks. He went into a cigar store telephone booth and dropped a nickel into the slot.

Benton answered. He had managed to elude the pursuers and was glad to know Andrews had escaped.

"I couldn't get to the auto," he said; "I had to drift the other way. If I'd made the machine, I wouldn't have to spill bad news."

Andrews face hardened. "Bad news? Spill it!" "A stick-up!" declared Benton. "Come around and see me."

A stick-up! Andrews slammed the telephone receiver down on the hook. Was Benton lying?



*The faint noises of
night were marred
by shouts—pursuit
had begun*



*"Four fingers from
each hand," he
said, softly. "I'll
let you keep your
thumbs"*

Andrews' swift brain blazed as he understood what had been implied. Was Benton going to say that, while coming from the Van Wert country home to New York, he had been robbed? Was Benton trying to double-cross him? Andrews' lips drew back from his teeth. So someone had stolen the pearls from Benton before he had reached home! A pretty story!

Andrews strode from the cigar store, a scowl upon his face. He almost ran into a slender brunette.

She grasped his arm and stopped him. "Ted! What's the matter?"

He whirled and recognized her. "Lots, Cora," he replied briefly. "I'm going up and cut the heart out of Benton! He claims—"

"The papers say a necklace was stolen. Why should—"

"He says he was stuck-up."

Her eyes narrowed as her swift feminine brain analyzed this statement. "I don't know Benton," she said.

"I'll attend to him." He started on. "If he thinks he can get away with—"

"Wait a minute!" Her voice was commanding, and he paused instinctively. "I gave you a tip on that proposition," she went on. "I want to know all about it. Tell me!"

Andrews quickly outlined the events of the night as he knew them. To the casual passerby, it looked as though a young business man was talking with an acquaintance. Andrews was young, well-built, tanned of face and alert in manner. Cora was a sweet being; her complexion discreetly and sparingly applied, and her afternoon frock of solid black, sleeveless, with filmy panels that almost reached the ground, closely followed the graceful contour of her figure.

"And what is Benton like?" she asked, as he finished. "What does he look like? What does he think about?"

"Oh, he's about medium height, broad-shouldered, rather small eyes, and—he's very careful about his hands. Nice, white hands." Andrews thought for a moment. "He doesn't care for women. Benton says that a woman always gets a man into trouble. He says that some day you'll get jealous, and spill all you know." He paused uncomfortably. "You know, there's a little bit of truth in that. I've seen it happen time and time again. After Molly Carter heard that Bill was—"

"Molly was a fool," interrupted Cora. "You know that."

"Sure she was a fool, but that didn't get Bill out. She went up to Dannemora to see him, and did everything she—What's the use of all this? I'm going to make Benton come through or plow—He's double-crossing me!"

"Perhaps he is," said Cora reflectively, "but if you bump him off, how do you know you'll get that necklace? If he's hidden it—and he has—how do you know you'll find it? I thought we were going over to Europe after this job."

"I told you we'd take in Monte Carlo," Andrews declared, "and we'll do it."

"You see Benton, then," Cora advised, "and let him talk. If his story is blah, we'll try another tack. I'll get into this game."

III

ANDREWS' interview with Benton was unsatisfactory. Benton told a long-winded and almost convincing story of a hold-up. He had walked from the Van Wert country home to a trolley, changed to a taxi, then to another trolley. Then, seeing the elevated tracks two blocks away, he had left the street car. And two men had slipped out of a dark alley, one had covered him with a gun while the other went through his pockets.

"They cleaned me!" said Benton. "Took everything—watch, money, and necklace. Honest, I feel rotten about it."

Andrews listened, saying very little. Threats, or fury would not secure the necklace. Benton would feel that he was compelled to stick by his story; to admit that the hold-up tale was a lie would be inviting death. Andrews decided to meet guile with guile. He left to get in touch with Cora.

Later that afternoon, Benton strolled from his rooms in a quiet and respectable apartment house in the West Seventies. As he neared the corner, a brunette appeared, coming from Broadway. She was exquisite, faintly perfumed; her scarlet gown was a conspicuous and noticeable note. A smile fluttered across her mouth as she approached him.

Benton was not blind, neither was he ancient, nor was he dumb. Five minutes later he was escorting Cora into a softly lighted restaurant.

Ten minutes later Andrews was in Benton's apartment.

There were three rooms in the suite: a living room, a bedroom, and a serving pantry. The bed was a real antique of the Louis XIV period, narrow, with an ornately carved head-board, and slender spindling legs. The living room was masculine—comfortable chairs, ash trays, a lounge with brilliantly colored Navajo blanket smoldering on it, and a portable cellaret that had seen recent useage. There was a full-length mirror and paintings on the walls.

Andrews dismissed the pantry from consideration after a swift examination. There was a closet opening off the living room, and he opened the door. Inside were several suits of clothes, stolidly draped upon hangers, and his expert fingers ran down the seams in search of the pearls. Then lifting each hanger separately he searched beneath the clothes, thinking that perhaps the string had been concealed there. He had the fourth hanger in his hands when he heard the sound of a key being thrust into the lock of the entrance door.

It must be Benton! Andrews had arranged with Cora that she should detain the man until a thorough examination of the apartment had been made. Evidently, a slip-up. Andrews slipped swiftly in the closet, and softly closed the door.

The girl entered first, her high heels clicking as she stepped across the threshold. She murmured a complimentary phrase, and Benton answered her. Within the closet, Andrews crouched silently, his eye at the keyhole, one hand caressing a blue-steel automatic.

HIGH HAND AT MIDNIGHT by Francis Dickie next issue

Cora passed across his field of vision, a graceful, swaying figure, the white roundness of her arms revealed through the openings of her scarlet gown. Benton followed, and Andrews' other hand slipped to the door knob. Then he mastered his impulse to leap in to the room and surprise Benton.

"—And what is your occupation, Mr. Brown?" Cora was inquiring, a mocking note in her voice. "Of course your name is really Brown."

"Brown, Black, White, or Scarlet, or whatever your favorite color may be," Benton replied. "I'm about to introduce you to Black and White."

There was the sound of pouring liquid, and the fizz of carbonated water.

"That one is yours," Cora said. "I'll take ginger ale in mine, and a little ice."

"You will? Just a moment; I'll get some ice."

Benton's footsteps traveled in the direction of the serving pantry. Suddenly the door of the closet was pulled open, and Cora confronted Andrews.

"Give me your gat—quick!" she whispered imperatively, not surprised to see him. "I want to—"

Andrews hesitated. "What did you bring him here for?"

"Tell you later. Give me your gat! Before he comes back!"

From the pantry came Benton's voice. "Lone-some in there?"

Cora laughed, a clear trill that was charming and seemingly pleased. "Just a little bit," she answered. Then she whispered commandingly to Andrews: "Give me your gat!"

For a moment their eyes met. Then, a tender smile curved her lips. "Come on," she coaxed softly. "Gimme."

ANDREWS passed over the gun, the only one he had. The blue-steel automatic was poised a moment in her hand, then it vanished and she closed the closet door.

Unarmed, in the darkness of the closet, Andrews crouched at the key hole. His life was in Cora's hand. For if Benton discovered the man in the closet, he would shoot to kill. By spying upon Benton's movements in the apartment without his knowledge and consent, Andrews was behaving as though he did not trust Benton, did not believe his story of the hold-up, and planned to steal from him.

"Here's mud in your eye," was Cora's toast, as the clink of touched glasses was heard. There was a

moment of silence. "What is your favorite flower?" she asked.

"A brunette," Benton answered swiftly. "And yours?"

"Pearls," she replied. "In fact, if I had my 'rathers' I'd be 'whoever' stole that string from those people in Long Island last night. Where was it—Van Gerts, or some name like that?"

Benton spoke slowly. "You seem—to be 'right,'" he said. "Would you be surprised if I told you that I know who put that over?"

"Not at all. I made you a long time ago," Cora said. "You fanned the waiter in the restaurant."

"A bad habit. Only do it occasionally, when I forget." Again the sound of carbonated water sizzling into a glass. "I know who pulled that trick," Benton went on. "He'll get a stretch some day. Wouldn't be surprised if he's buried for this one. He's mixed up with a blonde."

In the closet, Andrews knew the way Cora received this remark. He could not see her, but he sensed that she was leaning forward, angered.

"Is that straight?" she asked crisply.

"Yes," Benton chuckled. "Do you really think that Andrews is playing fair with you?"

In the queer silence that followed the honking horn of a passing taxi sounded strangely loud, like coarse laughter.

"So you knew!" Cora's voice flattened. "What do you know?"

"That you are chummy with Andrews, and that you picked me up this afternoon to find out whether I really was robbed of that necklace last night," Benton replied quietly.

Still, in the close, stifling closet, Andrews was hard hit with surprise. Before Cora had unmasked her batteries, before she had cajoled Benton into an admission, or led him to boast and betray himself, her plan had been punctured by his knowledge of her identity and relationship to Andrews.

"You're partly right," she said. "I tipped him off to the job, and I want my split. But if the necklace is gone—"

"Maybe you can vamp Andrews into believing you tipped the Van Wert job," said Benton, "but I know better. Anyway, the necklace is gone. He's a dub, besides. Why do you cling to him. Think of that blonde!"

"What blonde? And don't think for a moment that I'm shackled to any bush-league prowler. If he's been roving—"

"He has!" Benton's voice took on a warmer note. "You and I, Cora, could put over big-time stuff."

Sarcasm edged the girl's laugh. "Yes; like this Van Wert job. You and I do the heavy work, and somebody else gets the jack."

"Maybe; this one time. Anyway, you're sticky on Andrews, while he's trailing a blonde. The trouble is, we're both tied up wrong. I passed out of the blonde's life—Andrews stepped in—last Wednesday night. At exactly seven-thirty I was told farewell, and he was tagged."

"Last Wednesday night! Seven-thirty! Why, he told me he was with you until midnight! Do you mean—"

"I left Andrews and the blonde together just after dinner," Benton said calmly.

STILL crouched in the closet, Andrews was listening to the lies Benton was telling. He had been with the man until midnight, talking over their proposed foray upon the Van Wert job. He was growing uneasy; Cora was apparently believing Benton. Perhaps her anger was feigned—she was merely encouraging Benton to talk, he thought. She would lead the conversation back to pearls again.

"You're letting Andrews get away with cross-eyed murder," Benton was declaring. "Chop loose from him. What do you say?"

"And take up with another half-wit?" she asked slyly.

"He's no half-wit; he was smart enough to grab my blonde. He promised to take her to Monte Carlo. She believed him, all—"

"He did!" Cora's fury was terrific. "He promised—I'll get to the bottom of this!" Her draperies swished across the room. "Come out and tell me the truth!"

Andrews made an undignified entrance into the living room. He was pulled forth by a flashing-eyed, thin-lipped Cora whose black hair was electric with anger. He was met and greeted by an astonished Benton, who snatched an automatic from somewhere instantly. The menacing muzzle of the gun was pointed at Andrews' belt-buckle.

Cora's eyes flamed dangerously, but the cold pin-
(Continued on page 29)

The Uses of Ad-verse-ity

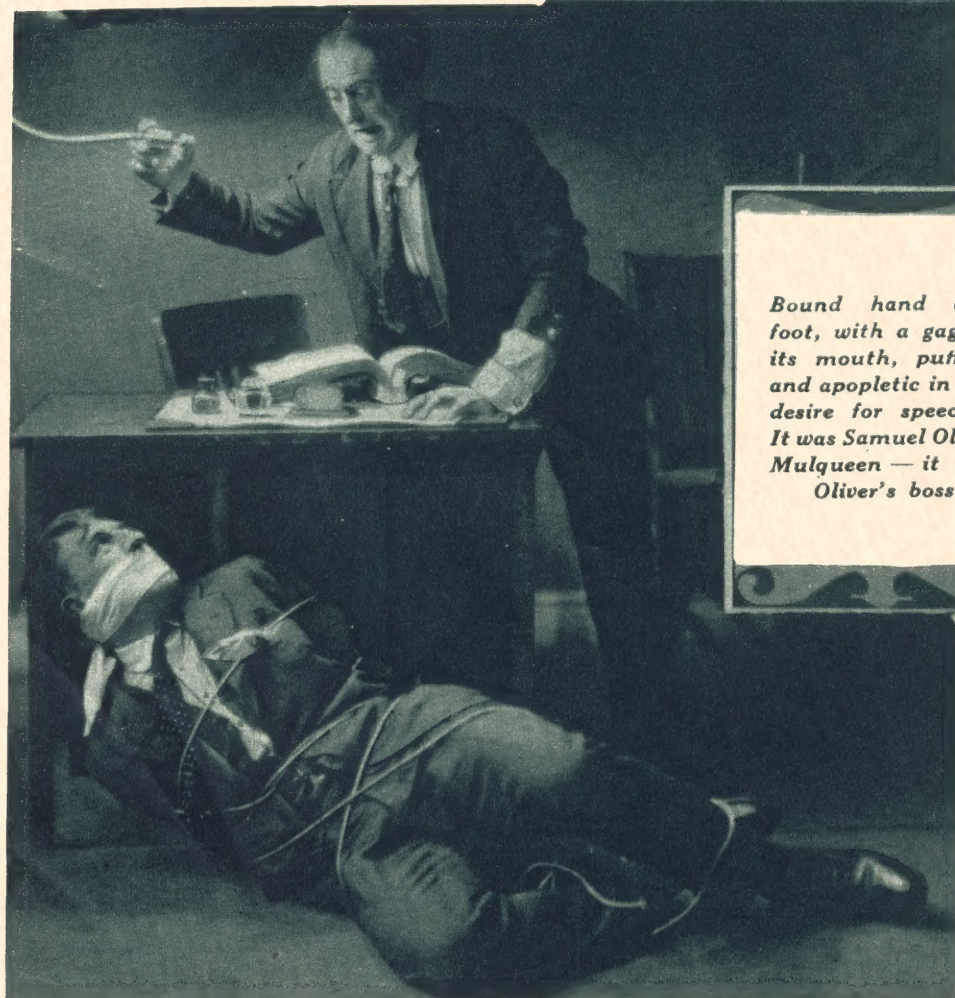
by LYON MEARSON

Oswald blushed a very pretty pink. "Neat," commented the boss. "Shakespeare never did anything like this"

WHEN 'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre it was a very simple matter. If a man was a lyre smiter, why, he smote the lyre. That was his business, just as gargling pebbles was the business of Demosthenes, and proving that the sum of the square on the two sides of a right triangle was equal to the square on the hypotenuse was Pythagoras' business. A man who was a lyre smiter, or a pebble gargler, or a genius in any of the other arts, did not have to labor on the building of the Pyramids to make a living, nor did he have to guard sheep on the Peloponesian hillsides, nor be a ferryman on the blue Aegian sea. He was able to live quite comfortably off his art.

That was then. Nowadays a lyre smiter, to live decently and connect with three squares a day, must do this smiting on the side; he must be able to negotiate a trial balance on the first of every month for his boss, or at any rate, to write those stirring letters beginning: "In response to yrs. of the 30th ult. we beg to acknowledge receipt of yr. order . . ."

In other words, you can't depend on poetry for a living. Oswald Clavering was a poet. Fortunately, he had a working knowledge of double entry book-keeping. That kept him in comfort, if not in luxury, on twenty-five dollars a week. This is no princely income, yet for a single man it will do, in a pinch.



Bound hand and foot, with a gag in its mouth, puffing and apoplectic in the desire for speech—It was Samuel Oliver Mulqueen — it was Oliver's boss

The trouble with Oswald Clavering is that though he was a single man, he desired to cease living in that state of so-called blessedness. There was a girl. Everybody knows that twenty-five dollars a week is not enough to support a wife with, even if you are an unpublished poet and would just as soon starve, in order to keep up the tradition. However, let us say one thing for Oswald. He was a good bookkeeper—easily worth more than he was getting. That's the trouble with being worth more; you cannot get it at a forced sale, and Oswald knew it.

So he stayed on being a bookkeeper for the Mulqueen Plumbing Supply Company, and a lyre smiter on the side. Not that anybody but the girl took his verse seriously; not even the editors. He had a very decent collection of rejection slips, those facile, lying little colored slips that inform you that this rejection does not imply any lack of merit, but simply, et cetera. That did not bother him very much, however; he was satisfied to go on making his verses, whether they bought them or not.

But this day the canker was in his soul. He wanted to get married. He wanted a raise, in order to accomplish same. Business was not any too good for Mulqueen at this time, but Oswald knew he deserved a raise. And he knew that Mulqueen, the old skinflint, knew it. That being the case, you will naturally inquire why he did not go into the boss's private office and demand his raise. That's what any ordinary man would have done.

But not so Oswald. There was a shyness in his sensitive soul; a shrinking from the coarse, misunderstanding vulgarity of Mulqueen; his heavy, sarcastic shafts and his rudeness. In other words, Mulqueen had the Indian sign on him. Oswald was afraid of him.

Yet, in spite of this, Oswald had nerved himself up. The thing had to be done, and he might as well get it over with, for better or for worse. For better or for worse! The phrase was magical to him. He imagined himself standing before the minister, taking a certain girl for better or for worse. A thrill went through him. Ah, the summer moon, a day in June, to spoon, and softly croon, on Southern seas, the while the breeze, sighs softly through the trees and—

"Clavering!" The huge bellow of Mulqueen

through the open door of his private office filled the outer office and crashed through the consciousness of Oswald as he sat making up this song about young love. He jumped to his feet.

"Commear," beckoned the boss, going back to his desk.

As always in times of mental excitement, Mulqueen was seated at his desk calm and cold, bulking huge over the mahogany, stroking his blue-veined jowls with a pudgy hand, while the hard blue-steel eyes of him, shining like sapphires, gleamed on the shrinking little Oswald Clavering, bookkeeper and sometime lyre-smiter. Mulqueen breathed heavily through his nose, took a puff of his big cigar, and threw it angrily to the floor at the side of the desk. He stamped on it as though it were the head of a serpent. As though it were Oswald.

BEFORE him on the desk, open at the first page, was the ledger of the Mulqueen Plumbing Supply Company. Oswald did not know he had taken this, though it was a custom of Mulqueen's to go through it once a month and see for himself how much money was outstanding. Of course, he could have required Oswald to give him a monthly statement; but that did not suit. It soothed his soul to go through the book himself, to gloat over each item, to rub his pudgy hands over each dollar. Somebody else's statement would rob him of this heart balm.

Oswald had not expected him to commandeer the book for some few days. Usually he asked Oswald for it. But this time, for no earthy reason, he was sitting here with the book in front of him, and within the book was something Oswald would have given worlds to save from the sight of Mulqueen. Mulqueen, with elaborate care, adjusted his gold eyeglasses on his short nose, breathed heavily through said member, and picked up the loose sheet he found in the front part of the book.

"If it's all the same to you, Clavering," said the boss, "I'd like to know what this means." He held the paper gingerly, as though it were infected. He peered at it through his glasses again, and looked up at Oswald inquiringly.

"It's—ah—it's a memorandum, sir. Ah—to remind me—that is—"

"Quite so! Quite so," Mulqueen's voice squeaked as it always did when he was trying to be sarcastic. "A clever idea, too. Stupid of me not to know it was a memorandum. All bookkeepers ought to learn to make their—ah—memoranda in verse, like this." He read loudly from the paper, so that all in the outer office could hear through the open door

*Don't forget to charge upon
The bill of Jones & Knipe
A dozen nickel faucets, and
Ten feet of three-inch pipe.*

Oswald blushed a very pretty pink. "Neat!" commented the boss. "Shakespeare never did anything like this. Nor this gem:"

*Add on to the account of
Obadiah More
A Grade B. marble basin—
Six dollars ninety-four.*

"Brilliant," said Mulqueen, as Oswald simpered nervously. "I see you've reduced the price fifty-three cents, too—I suppose that's because seven forty-seven wouldn't have rhymed, eh? Poetic license, maybe, he went on, "though I dislike to pay for the license myself, which I'm doing just because seven doesn't happen to rhyme with More. However, we'll let that pass. The next song is even better:"

*Charge up to Francis X. McGrath
The fixtures for a shower bath,
And send to Patrick Michael Schmitt
A billy doo marked "Please remit!"*

"And this," he went on with forced sweetness, the while his skin purpled and the veins stood out on his nose:

*In Ledger A to F, old son,
Correct the bill of Black & Gunn.
And charge to Fieldstream Country Club
A seven dollar 'named tub.*

He changed suddenly to anger. He slapped the book violently, and Oswald trembled, his weak eyes searching for a means of honorable escape.

"The thing that I want to know is," he slapped the ledger again loudly, "The thing that I want to know is, am I paying you for bookkeeping or for poeting. Do—"

"They're just memorandums—ah—I mean, memorandas—memoranda—stuttered Oswald.

"They're poems," thundered Mulqueen, slapping the book once more. "It takes time to write poetry—and I'm paying for your time. I—"

"They don't take any time, sir," protested Oswald, standing by his guns. "I write them as quickly as I'd write any other note. You see, it helps me to remember—"

"Don't interrupt me," thundered the boss again. "I tell you, this waste of time has got to stop. Either you're a bookkeeper or you're a poet—but you cannot be both. If you want to stay with me you're a bookkeeper. Now, remember that," he nodded to the door, showing that the interview was over.

SOMEHOW or other Oswald got to his high chair and quickly bent over his books, pretending not to hear the snickers of the office force. His ears, however, were red to the tips—and his heart and soul were red with anger and blood lust—blood lust, for the gore of Mulqueen.

Now, how in the name of all that's worth while can a man ask for a raise in the face of an incident of this nature, Oswald told himself. That settled that for today, anyway. Today and tomorrow Mulqueen would be busy with the ledger; in no mood for granting a raise, providing a man had the courage to ask for it.

As he bent over his books, trying to appear as though he were working, something seemed to hammer at the outer portals of his consciousness, some portent of evil to come, some feeling that all was not well, that something was wrong. It hung heavy over the spirit of Oswald Clavering, lyre smiter.

Then suddenly he remembered. In the back of the ledger at present in the possession of Mulqueen was another poem, which absent mindedly he, Oswald, had thrust there after writing it, intending to take it away with him that night. The words of this bit of verse echoed through his mind; mechanically he repeated them:

*If Samuel Oliver Mulqueen
Should drink a swig of paris green
And lie, a lily in his hand,
His face turned toward the shining strand
On high,
Would I give way to heartfelt grief,
Would I repine and weep? In brief,
Not I.*

*So far I'd be from bitter tears
I'd raise my voice in rousing cheers.*

Samuel Oliver Mulqueen being his boss. Bitterly he repeated the words to himself, syllable by syllable, like a rosary. He glanced furtively toward Mulqueen's private office. Through the door he could see that the boss was engaged on the first few pages. It would be hours before he would come to the part of the ledger that contained the foregoing bit of verse.

It at once became apparent to Oswald that under no circumstances must the boss read those words. Undoubtedly it would mean dismissal—a terrifying thing to Oswald, who dreaded hunting for a job, and always feared he would never find it.

There was another reason he did not wish the boss to find the poem. That reason was a peculiar one. The fact of the matter was that the words did not really express his feelings towards Mulqueen. In spite of Mulqueen's rough manner and frequent heavy sarcasm, he liked the man. It was inexplicable, but he did. There was something downright, something straightforward about the man that appealed to Oswald. He had written the bit of verse in a moment of pique, and one is apt to say things in verse that he would never think of saying in conversation—or even thinking. And Oswald was a mild-mannered, pacific little fellow, desiring the death of no one.

In addition, then, to the danger of losing his job if the boss found the ill-conceived literary effort, of which he was fully cognizant, Oswald felt that he would give anything not to have Mulqueen read the verses and imagine that they were his, Oswald's, opinion of him. Yet how was he to get possession of the ledger before the boss reached the part that contained said verses. He considered going in and asking for it, on the plea that he had to make an entry. He cast this aside, as being too likely to fail. Mulqueen would tell him to do it later, when he was through with the book. What to do? What to do?

"Day dreaming again, Clavering? Or thinking up something new to put over on old Kid Shakespeare?" The cold, edged voice of the office manager came over his shoulder, and Oswald was recalled to himself sharply. He hated the man who stood there, a thin, ferret-like face with mean eyes, and the long, lean fingers of a gambler; he stood next to Oswald, his fingers toying with an abomination that hung on his watch chain in lieu of a charm. The chain was composed of heavy solid gold links, of the kind popular in the early nineties, and the watch charm was a

hand carved basket made out of a peach stone, with the manager's initials, "J. B." in raised letters on the front of it. For some reason Sanford, the manager, was inordinately fond of the thing, and it occupied a very prominent place on his vest.

OSWALD had never liked the man, since his advent into the office two months ago. In the first place, Oswald had believed that he himself would get the place. There had never been an office manager in the office of the Mulqueen Plumbing Supply Company before. There had been no need for one—until Mulqueen took up golf. He had always been there himself, and needed no one to see that the place was run right. But since being introduced to the fascinating pastime of chasing a funny little ball over hill and dale, Mulqueen had taken to staying away week-ends and occasional week-day afternoons.

It had been a great disappointment to Oswald when Mulqueen had announced that he had hired an office manager, yet he had said nothing. He simply went on with his bookkeeping and his verses. In due course Sanford—James Sanford—appeared, and Oswald liked him still less than he had intended to on the announcement of his engagement. The man was a slave driver, and Oswald needed no one over him to force him to his work. He was a good bookkeeper. He resented the little mean eyes of Sanford on his back continually, to see that he was working. They bothered him. And the lean, gambler's fingers playing continually with the horrible thing hanging on his watch chain, the peach basket, irritated him unreasonably. The man was a constant reminder of the job Oswald ought to have had.

He mumbled a reply to Sanford, and went on with his work, his brain working furiously. How to get the ledger away from Mulqueen? Craven, a large Western customer, came in and was ushered into Mulqueen's office, where he was greeted effusively. He stayed there for an hour, during which time the ledger lay open on the desk between them, unused. Yet Oswald did not dare go in and take it. He was afraid to interrupt the taking of an obviously large order. After Craven had gone Mulqueen rang for Oswald. He was jocose, heavily so. It had been a large order.

"Put this in the safe, Longfellow," he directed, handing him a roll of large bills. "These Western birds seem to be afraid of banks—Craven's just bought five thousand dollars worth, and paid for it in advance—in cash." He glanced at his watch. "Five o'clock. Bank's closed long ago. Stick it in the cash drawer, and lock it before you begin your next poem," he smiled. He was in good humor.

"Yes, sir," said Oswald. "There's thirty-five hundred there now—I don't think it ought to be—" "Nonsense, Whittier," exclaimed Mulqueen, his red face crinkling up into a smile again. "It's perfectly safe there overnight."

"I'll enter it—" said Oswald, reaching for the ledger.

"Never mind. Tomorrow'll do," said Mulqueen. "I'm using the book now." He motioned to the door. "On your way, Omar Khayyam." Oswald went out.

IT was getting late. At five-thirty his day's work would be done—and from the looks of it Mulqueen would still be at the ledger. This was confirmed a few minutes later, when Mulqueen's wife called up. Through the open door Oswald heard the boss tell her that he would leave for home at seven, as he was working on the books.

His heart sank. Not that, in the ordinary course, Mulqueen would get to the offensive poem this night, even by seven. But Mulqueen was one of the older breeds of employer; he considered it his duty to be at his desk by seven-thirty A. M. every morning, even though his employees did not get in until nine. Oswald had thought of getting in before him, opening the safe and taking the poem out of the ledger, which would be put away in the book compartment, but it occurred to him that it would look very strange for him to be in the office at that hour, as his work did not warrant it.

There was only one thing to do, he finally decided. That evening he would return to the office. He had a key, and he knew the combination of the safe. He could then abstract the paper and nobody need be any wiser. He felt better after deciding this.

IT was a dark night, and the Mulqueen Plumbing Supply Company was in a dark section. Matter-of-fact as he tried to be, Oswald could not repress a certain thrill, a thrill of adventure mingled with apprehension, as he approached the place. It was

(Continued on next page)

FATE ON THE TRAIN

BY W.S.

Winner of Sixth Prize in Great Midnight Thrill Contest



I gave
her my
card

WE entered the train. She smiled, so did I—or perhaps I did first, you know how those things happen.

We sat together during the journey—twenty miles.

"What's your name?" she asked, her blue eyes smiling.

I gave her my card.

"And yours?"

"I'll just be Nellie Jones—alright?"

"But that isn't fair," I objected.

The conductor called our destination and we alighted. She hurried away at the exit and I scarcely hoped to see her again. Completing my

business I returned on the next train and reached home late.

The telephone rang.

"Is this Jim Stimson?"

"Yes."

There was a click on the line. I shook the hook to no avail.

Ten minutes later the siren of the police flying squadron stabbed the stillness. The open exhaust throbbed before our house. The door bell rang.

I answered.

"Are you Jim Stimson?"

I admitted it.

"The young lady you rode out of town with in the train tonight is dead. She was poisoned. Your card was found on her person, and you were the last one seen with her alive."

The little mantel clock rang—ding, ding, ding, ding. Midnight!

Sadly, I went with the police. Never shall I forget that ride. I knew I had an alibi—but the scandal! The darkened countryside streaked past. Zig-zag fences writhed before our dazzling headlights. The siren shrieked.

"It looks pretty tough for you!" commented the sergeant.

"Is she dead?" I asked in dread. He did not answer, but clutched me tighter.

We stopped at police headquarters and rushed inside. There on a cot lay—I'll still call her Nellie Jones. The presence of death awed us. All turned to me. I was the murderer. There was my victim.

"Good Lord, I never did anything to her. I'm absolutely innocent of this!" I cried. No one heeded me. They were awaiting my confession.

The wall clock mocked—tick-tock, tick-tock, you will flirt with pretty girls, eh!—tick-tock, tick-tock.

A sigh pierced the hush.

The corpse moved? The eyelids fluttered. Another sigh.

"Where am I?" she murmured.

"My Gawd, she ain't dead after all," the sergeant said, sort of disappointed.

In half an hour the young lady was O. K. Amnesia followed by unconsciousness had caused the trouble. The young lady and I were returned to our home town in a police car. The vision sat beside me and murmured apologies. My ears were deaf and my lips were dumb; darn it, she might drop dead again.

Incidentally, I don't smile at strange girls now.

THE USES OF ADVERSITY

(Continued from preceding page)

after ten o'clock, in a section devoted to giant warehouses, and not a soul was to be seen in the streets. Oswald's footfalls echoed along the sidewalk, solitary and ghostly.

He wondered whether, after all, he had better do it. Better, perhaps, to take a chance on being able to get the book in the morning before the boss could get to the verses. It seemed such a sneaky, illegal thing to do, this coming in late at night and opening the safe. He would, perhaps, have turned and retraced his steps, had he not suddenly discovered that he was standing outside the entrance to the warehouse of the Mulqueen Plumbing Supply Company, S. O. Mulqueen, Prop. He fitted his key to the outside door and opened it silently while he was yet debating the advisability of the step.

To get to the office, where the great safe was, he had to go through the ground floor of the warehouse. It was spooky and dark. Impelled by his surroundings, Oswald was silent as the grave as he advanced to the office. The door of the office was open, as usual, and in the corner loomed the great black bulk of the safe. A sudden shaft of moonlight, as the moon broke through a cloud, penetrated the room like a silver knife.

Oswald's breath came out of his body with a gasp, and his hair stood up. In front of the open safe crouched the dark figure of a man.

A safe breaker! It shot instantly through Oswald's brain. A safebreaker, and over eight thousand dollars in cash there, to say nothing about thousands of dollars in negotiable Liberty Bonds.

His spirit soaring with the thrill of it, though his knees knocked with fright, Oswald leaped on the

intruder, his one idea in all the world being to save the property of Samuel Oliver Mulqueen.

They went down into a heap on the floor, scrambling around, arms and hands flailing, seeking for holds which neither could get, and in the tenseness of the struggle in the dark Oswald found himself swearing—something he had never suspected he could do.

Back and forth they struggled in the dark Oswald getting the worst of it, as he was small and slight. But his fright was over now, and he fought hard. Harder than he knew, for it was his opponent who gave up first.

There had been a sound of running feet outside, and this scared the intruder evidently. He wrenched himself free from Oswald's grasp.

"Damn you!" he grated and turned to dash through the door. Oswald flung himself forward again and seized him, but was flung off. Something came away in his hand. The dark, silent figure melted away through the door, into the shadows like a gray ghost in the night.

Panting and disheveled, yet triumphant, Oswald made his way through the office to the wall switch, in order to get some light into the scene. Suddenly he stopped dead short again.

His foot had struck something. Something soft and yielding. Something human!

A chill went through Oswald. Was there a dead man here? His legs went weak again, of a sudden; he was nerveless, and a cold perspiration burst out gently over him. He tried the body with his foot. Yes, it was a body. His eyes were becoming accus-

tomed to the darkness now, and he could dimly discern it on the floor.

Awesomely, fearfully, he circled it, making his way to the switch. He pressed the switch, and stood there blinking, blind, in the brilliant and sudden light.

In front of him, when he could see again, was the body. But a hasty glance convinced him that it was alive. It was bound hand and foot, with a gag in its mouth, rotund, corpulent, red, puffing and apoplectic in the desire for speech and the inability to gratify that desire.

It was Samuel Oliver Mulqueen.

It was Oswald's boss.

IT developed that, having nothing better to do that evening, and finding time hanging heavily on his hands, Mulqueen had decided to come back to the office and continue his examination of the books. This he was doing when abruptly darkness had closed in around him, and he lost consciousness. When he recovered consciousness he was bound and gagged, and the burglar was going through the safe. That was the moment Oswald had picked for his entrance. A hasty examination of the safe showed that nothing had been taken—the timely appearance of Oswald had prevented that.

They were seated now in Mulqueen's office, on opposite sides of his big desk, as Mulqueen told his side of it.

"First poet I ever saw that was of any real use," he grumbled, his pudgy hand feeling a huge lump on the back of his head. "I guess I owe you some-

(Concluded on page 14)

The Beetle

by
CARL ALYMER



He stepped over to the bureau and dropped to his knees. His right hand flashed forward quickly



WHEN the murder of Captain Harvey Karns, an old seadog, was solved, Detective Gilmore was given the credit for exacting the confession from the culprit.

As a reward for his work on the case, he was promoted to the rank of detective sergeant. Gilmore was and is still my friend and I make this story public with no desire to discredit his ability or to ruin his reputation. As a matter of fact, he showed considerable skill in his handling of an extremely delicate situation; a man with less presence of mind might easily have blundered and spoiled the chances of forcing the issue to its logical conclusion.

It must be said in truth, however, that Gilmore was not responsible for creating the circumstances which lead to the highly dramatic climax. It was Fate that pulled the strings; no human being could have contrived so startling and tragi-ludicrous a situation.

The murder of Captain Karns was committed at his home in Midvale, an east coast seaport. The whole truth was not made public at the time. It was generally known only that the guilty man had confessed. *Why* he confessed was not given out by the police and that was the only unique and interesting feature of the case. The commonplace facts which were printed did not attract much attention and were soon forgotten.

When the news of the murder was telephoned from Midvale to county headquarters Gilmore and I were assigned to investigate. I had been on the county force only a few months at the time and the case was really in charge of Gilmore with myself acting as assistant. We reached the Karns house—a small frame building near the town limits—at about one o'clock in the morning.

The Captain's body lay on the floor of his bedroom on the second floor. He was in his pajamas and there was an ugly wound over his heart. The room showed no signs of a struggle other than a small overturned table which had been standing near the bed—and this table might have been upset by the Captain reeling against it when he fell to the floor. Under the table lay a huge, clumsy, cheap watch. The crystal was broken and the hands had stopped at twenty minutes to twelve. From the disarranged covers and the depression in the mattress it was pretty clear that the Captain had been in the bed before the death struggle.

From our examination of the other occupants of the house we learned the following facts: Not including the Captain and Mrs. Karns, there were eight persons in the house, six men and two women. The latter were the mother and the maiden aunt of

Mrs. Karns. All of the men were seamen who boarded in the Karns Rooming House. The evidence was that Mrs. Karns had gone to town on a visit to a friend, and had not returned until at least a half-hour after the murder.

Captain Karns had returned from a trip to Havana a few days before. On the night of the crime he and all six roomers had been in the big parlor on the lower floor from about seven to ten o'clock. The Captain had exhibited some of the treasures and curios he had picked up on his last voyage. There were among other things, four perfect pearls of an almost translucent white color and some black

cameos. Karns had put the value of the pearls at from two to four thousand dollars each and had bragged that after he had sold them, it would no longer be necessary for his wife to keep boarders.

All of the men had separate rooms on the second floor. All of them swore that when the session in the parlor had broken up they had gone to their rooms and to bed immediately.

Everyone in the house had been awakened by the Captain's terrible scream a little before midnight. None of the men reached the hall to investigate for several moments. One of them switched on the hall light, and at that time three other men—all but partly dressed—were in the hall each of them near the door to his room. From the facts as we learned them, it was apparent that anyone of the six men could have re-entered his own room before the lights had been turned on.

But which one of them was guilty? There were no tangible clues of any kind; no fingerprints were on the handle of the blood-stained knife which lay under Captain Karns' bed. We assumed that the motive for the murder had been the robbery of the pearls. The crime had failed, for we found the pearls in a small leather bag in a bureau drawer in the Captain's room.

Which one of the six men had been tempted by

A guilty conscience may be more terrible than the torment of the third degree. Coupled with the supernatural—well, "The Bug" made this man prefer the chair



"It's something—it's something more important than that. I'm sure of it. Keep a hand on your gun"

that I was forced to rise from my chair and start pacing the hall. Just at that moment a light was flashed on in the room two doors to the rear of the Captain's. We knew that the name of the boarder in that lighted room was Charlie Elstun. Elstun was a tall, powerful man of about thirty.

Detective Gilmore instantly tip-toed over to me and whispered, "I told you! It's beginning to happen."

"What's beginning to happen? I asked.

"I—I—I don't know, but don't you feel it?"

I shook my head; probably because I was too excited to admit that Gilmore was right. After some ten minutes the light in Elstun's room was turned out. "He is probably not feeling well and got up to take some medicine," I said hopefully.

This time Gilmore shook his head. "No," he replied in a low tone. "It's—it's something more important than that. I'm sure of it. Keep a hand on your gun."

About half an hour passed. During this time the dreadful silence remained unbroken. The suspense was almost unendurable, the more so because our suspicions were vague. It did not seem possible

the sight of the treasure? In the absence of any eye witness and of any other testimony pointing directly or indirectly to any one of the men, our task appeared to be hopeless. Detective Gilmore put all of them through a stiff grilling, but each of them maintained his innocence.

FIVE hours later, that is, at about six o'clock in the morning, an undertaker arrived. As detective Gilmore and the undertaker began to lift the Captain's body from the floor to the bed, a small black bug crawled from under the dead man's hand, hopped toward the wall and disappeared in a crack. It was a weird and gruesome incident. For some unexplainable reason I found an inward compulsion to stare at the crevice in which the bug had disappeared.

During the entire day Gilmore and I remained on the scene. Mrs. Karns, a small, and rather pretty woman with dark hair and large blue eyes, prepared a meal for us. She did not seem to be much affected by the crime, but neither Gilmore nor I thought it significant for we had previously found the folks on the seacoast to be of a stolid character, and able to restrain their emotions.

Gilmore made no examination of the premises, nor did he again question any of the house occupants. Instead, he haunted the hall-way and the rooms on the second floor. The dreary, uncouth surroundings cast a gloomy spell upon him. That night as we took our vigil in the hall outside the captain's room, Gilmore said to me, "I have a presentiment that something is going to happen. There is a certain tenseness about this atmosphere which has been keeping my nerves constantly on edge. One of the six men who are sleeping on this floor tonight is the murderer; we are pretty sure of that. How, in this utter darkness and quite unbearable silence he can keep his composure, is more than I can understand. If I had a guilty conscience and were forced to stay in this house, I should go mad."

I made no reply. In reality I was depressed more than Gilmore; the hollow sound of conversation in that dismal setting sent shivers through me.

All of the rooms on the second floor had transoms; for this reason we were able to observe that at about ten o'clock all of the rooms became dark. The intense silence which hung like a heavy shroud over the scene eventually excited me to such an extent

that that foreboding situation could last all night. We sensed an impending catastrophe and though neither of us could have given a logical reason for our feeling, we were both constrained to have implicit faith in the prophetic nature of our intuition.

At about quarter to twelve the light in Elstun's room was again turned on. Gilmore and I happened to be standing within a few feet of his door at the time. Slowly, without disturbing the silence, Gilmore moved close to the door and I followed. For several minutes we heard nothing. Eventually Elstun began moving about. His movements were spasmodic. There were intervals of sudden quiet as though the man had paused to listen. From the lower floor came the sounds of the huge parlor clock striking twelve; then again that appalling oppressive silence. Gilmore stood it only a few moments longer. He yanked open the door suddenly. The next instant he drew his revolver and entered the room. I stepped quickly after him. Elstun was slumped in a chair, his eyes bulging, a look of indescribable horror on his face. He raised the index finger of his right hand, his ashen lips began moving.

"Listen," he mumbled in an absolute monotone, "listen—to—that—damn—ticking. Tick, tick, tick. It's the captain's watch—haunting me. It's the Captain's watch trying to drive me mad!"

Of a sudden he rose. "Let me out of here!" It was almost a scream. "I can't stand it any longer; I must get away!"

I CONFESS that I was paralyzed into a mental and physical numbness, but Gilmore was quick to appreciate the possibilities of the situation. "Elstun," he said, "you killed Captain Karns and I'm going to keep you right here in this room till you tell me about it!"

"No—no! You must let me—"

"The sooner you talk," interrupted Gilmore, "the sooner you can get away from here—away from the Captain's watch!" Gilmore's tone was profoundly serious and the expression on his face did not change even to the extent of warning me against a betraying word or sign.

For several moments Elstun made no answer. Then abruptly the silence was broken. *Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick.* I had to summon all my will power to remain standing still. Even Gilmore was startled. For those ticks were not imaginary but real.

"There it is again," cired Elstun hoarsely. "Did you hear it?"

"It's the Captain's watch," Gilmore spoke slowly, "and it will tick, tick, tick, Elstun, until it breaks you into a raving maniac—unless you satisfy it and speak."

Elstun shuddered and collapsed into a chair. "I killed him!"

The tension relaxed. Elstun submitted meekly to

The captain's body lay on the floor of his bedroom. He was in his pajamas and there was an ugly wound over his heart



being handcuffed and led down into the parlor on the first floor. "If you don't want us to take you up into that room again," Gilmore told him, "you will tell us exactly what happened."

Elstun began speaking freely—it is some months since he paid the penalty—and I reproduce his confession herewith:

"I killed Captain Karns because I am in love with his wife and wanted to elope with her. I am pretty sure she loves me too, but she would not go away with me because I have no money to support her. I intended stealing the pearls and selling them. I was sure that I could then make his wife go with me. No one in this house knows of or even suspected our love affair for we were very careful to avoid being seen together.

"I made up my mind to kill the old man as soon as I saw he had the stones and I figured I had a good chance last night because his wife was visiting in town. I figured I had to do it before midnight when his wife would probably get home.

"Well, when I entered the hall I could tell, because of the transom, that his light was out. I crept along the hall quietly and went into his room. I knew that none of the doors on the second floor were locked. I intended to kill him, steal his pearls, hide them in the drain pipe which runs down the wall of the house just outside his window.

"As soon as I was in his room I heard him move. I stood still not daring to breathe. It was awful quiet in there—so quiet it frightened me. All of a sudden I found myself listening to a strange sound. It sounded terrible loud. I guess was it because the rest of the place was so quiet. Tick, tick, tick. It was his watch laying on the table near the bed.

"I started to move forward, but his bed sheets rustled as though he were turning. I didn't dare attack him while he was awake for he was a strong man and even though I was armed he would have had an even chance there in the dark.

"I stood still again and once more heard the sound of that damn watch. I can't describe what a funny feeling it gave me. It seemed that I just had to listen to it. Then all of a sudden I heard the loudest sound I ever heard in my life. I heard the watch stop ticking. That may sound funny to you, but did you ever hear a watch stop ticking in a room in which there was no other sound? It scared me so I wanted to scream.

"The next thing I knew the Captain had jumped out of bed and jostled into me. I guess maybe he had heard the watch stop too and wanted to wind it. When he jostled into me he hollered. He grabbed my shoulder. I just struck out once. He loosened his grip and fell back. It was luck that I stabbed him in the heart. I ran out of his room and into my room before the light in the hall was turned on. I threw away the knife but brought the handkerchief with me. After a few minutes I went into the hall and joined the others when they went into the room. I was dressed in my pajamas and looked just as scared as the rest of them and so none of them had reason to suspect me.

"It looked safe to me. Why should anyone think I did it? No one saw me and no one knew that I was in love with Mrs. Karns. But when I went to bed tonight I began worrying about it and couldn't sleep. Then, after I lay in bed a little while, I heard that strange noise again. It was the ticking of a watch, and there was no watch in my room because I haven't any. I stood it as long as I could and then I got up. I began looking for a watch, even though I knew there was none in the room. After a while the ticking stopped and I went back to bed again. But it started again. I had to listen to it. I kept telling myself it was imagination, but all the while I felt the sounds were too real for that. At last I had to get up again and light the gas. The ticks seemed to be coming from all parts of the room. *Ticks, ticks, ticks, ticks, ticks, ticks.* I heard them everywhere. I knew then it was the captain's watch. What else could it be that made that kind of a noise? I knew it was the same watch I heard in his room. The same watch that made me listen to it then.

"I wanted to run away, but I knew I couldn't do that with detectives in the hall. Even if I had been able to get out of the house, I couldn't have gone far for I had no money. At last you detectives came into the room. You heard the watch too, didn't you? Well, I guess you got me, but don't take me up into that room again."

AFTER Elstun had signed the confession, Detective Gilmore summoned three of the other boarders down into the parlor to guard him. Then he asked me to go up into Elstun's room with him. After we had closed the door, Gilmore said, "I'm going to find out about that ticking sound. That

fellow isn't talking nonsense because I heard the ticking myself when we were up in the room here before."

We stood in an attitude of listening. At length we heard it. There could be not the slightest doubt about it. *Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick.* And in that dreadfully silent room the sounds possessed a hollow, mocking weirdness. The ticking sounded like that made by a cheap watch, perhaps a little louder. But it was apparent at once that the sounds could not have been made by a watch, because there were at times several seconds pause between the successive ticks.

But if it was not a watch which was causing the ticking, what was it? Neither Gilmore nor I was inclined to place any faith in Elstun's story of a supernatural watch which had haunted him. And yet the phenomenon was mysterious enough to give both of us an uncanny sensation.

Then suddenly Gilmore began to laugh. He stepped over to the bureau and yanked it away from the wall. Then he dropped to his knees. His right hand flashed forward quickly. Laughing, he explained:

"Here's the fellow that did it," he cried. Between the fingers of his right hand he was holding a small black bug. "It's a beetle. And by the way, this particular species of beetle is called the *Deathwatch*. They are not very common in this part of the country. . . . This little fellow certainly lived up to his name—*Deathwatch*—his ticks, which frightened Elstun into confessing, are made by striking his head against hard wood.

"When a man has a guilty conscience," mused Detective Gilmore, "his sensations can certainly play queer tricks on him."

I ran a handkerchief over my forehead.

THE END

"GOING FOR THE DOCTOR," shouted the man running through the lobby of a New York Hotel a few seconds after a fusilade of bullets barked out. A man had actually shot and killed a girl who knew him by no other name than "Dutch." A few moments before the shooting occurred, "Dutch" had proposed marriage to his victim. The police think that the girl was killed because she stepped in line of fire between "Dutch" and an unknown man with whom he was quarreling. They have not found "Dutch."

Uses of Ad-verse-ity by Lyon Mearson

(Continued from page 10)

thing for that, Shelley," he smiled, a little ruefully. "That bird would've got away with a very decent haul if you hadn't jumped him the way you did—he was twice your size, too—"

"It was nothing," Oswald waved it away. "It was just something in the line of one's duty, of course; preventing robberies, and fighting large burglars . . ."

"Say not so, Keats," said the boss. "I'll buy you the finest rhyming dictionary on the market, my boy. By the way—" he looked at him fixedly, a thought occurring to him—"what on earth were you doing here at this time of night anyway?"

Oswald had expected that, and was prepared to make a clean breast of it. After all, maybe he wouldn't be dismissed for it. "Well—ah—er—you see, you know that page of poems you found in the ledger?" The other nodded. "Well, there was another one there—er—about you; in the back of the book," he went on hastily, while his courage stayed with him. "I didn't want you to see that, because—er—because—"

"Because it wasn't very complimentary, eh?" put in Mulqueen. He recited:

If Samuel Oliver Mulqueen

Should drink a swig of parisgreen—

Oswald blushed to his ears. "You—er—ah—you saw—"

"You bet I did, Chaucer," interrupted the boss. "I came across that jewel this afternoon. Why didn't you want me to see it?" he asked, regarding Oswald keenly. "Afraid of losing your job?"

"Well, yes," confessed Oswald. "But not entirely. You see, sir, that bit of verse does not really express the way I feel about you. One says things in verse because they rhyme, not because they're true. You can discharge me if you want to, but I want you to know that I couldn't accept a salary from a man and think such things about him—"

"That's all right, son," broke in the boss. "I know all about that. Fact is, I thought it was very

The Week's Unsolved Mysteries

DID HE DIE OR DID DR. DANZI MEET FOUL PLAY? Suspicious that the Italian physician of the Bronx did not die from the effects of bronchial pneumonia but was killed by an unknown hand, has led former friends of the late Dr. Emanuel Danzi to demand an exhumation of the dead man's body. The eighty-year old Countess Montemeril, who lived with the doctor twenty years and claims his property as a common law widow, has been subpoenaed and will be severely quizzed.

LINK THREE ASSAULTS OF GIRLS WITH DERVISH KILLING. The Jersey police have now decided that criminal assaults which were made on three girls of Bergen County within two hours of the brutal murder of Christina Dervish, bear a relation to this latter crime. It is the belief in official circles that these attacks were made by three of four men who have the key to the Dervish murder mystery in their keeping.

FIVE BULLETS FOR UNFAITHFULNESS. Married only a month, and not past her seventeenth birthday, Carmello Contreno of Scranton, Pa., is dead with five gaping bullet wounds in her young body—all because her jealous husband came to the fatal conclusion that she was untrue to him.

ANOTHER STENOGRAPHER PAYS THE GREAT PRICE! Refusing to discuss why, as alleged, he killed his pretty stenographer, who was a divorcee, Thomas Pollard, of Richmond, Virginia, is being held in \$10,000 bail.

clever." He pulled the poem out of his pocket. "My wife thought so, too. We'll call it square, if—what's that?"

"That" was a glittering bauble that lay on the corner of the desk. It was the thing that had come away in Oswald's hand when he had made a last grab at the intruder, and in the excitement of finding Mulqueen bound and gagged he had laid it down and temporarily forgotten about it. He picked it up now.

"Why, it belongs to the burglar, sir," he said. "I pulled it off him as he was leaving." They leaned over, and looked at it silently together.

It was an exceedingly heavy gold chain; part of one, at least; and depending from it was a charm carved out of a peach stone. In raised letters on the charm were the initials "J. S."

They were silent for a few moments. Oswald sat, immovable as a statue. Mulqueen whistled softly, tunelessly, between his clenched teeth. It was he who broke the silence first.

"Tennyson," he said softly, "I think I'm going to need a new officer manager beginning tomorrow—unless I'm very much mistaken."

Oswald nodded. "Looks a little like it," he said.

The boss looked quietly at Oswald for a brief space. "Kipling," he said finally, "how would you like to be poet laureate—ah—I mean, office manager—that is, if it doesn't cut in too heavily on the time you have to put in writing poetry?"

"I'd like to try it, sir," said Oswald soberly. "It would be the first time writing poetry ever got me anything substantial." He added in a sudden, shy burst of confidence. "You know, ah—er—there's a certain girl—ah—I mean, I want to get married . . ." He trailed off into an embarrassed silence.

Mulqueen nodded. "Sure. Congratulations." He detached the carved peachstone basket. "Here's your wedding present." He handed the atrocity to Oswald.

THE Trenholme Temper Dies

by

P. L. ATKINSON

THERE had been bad blood between Ted Malvern and Henry Trenholme for years—ever since the Telma Oil fiasco in 1918 when, at the solicitation of Malvern, Trenholme had invested fifty thousand dollars in Temla and lost every penny of it.

He never forgave Malvern, although events proved that Malvern was quite innocent of any wrong intention; but their mutual friends considered, rather, that he had never forgiven Malvern for that—and for marrying Alice Thorndyke.

Though the men frequently met, moving as they did in the same social set, they never spoke to each other, or about one another, and it was tactfully understood by every hostess in Claredale that Malvern and Trenholme, when their presence was inevitable at an affair, should be seated as far from each other at table as the laws of good taste would permit.

No hostess cared to evoke a display of the famous Trenholme temper, and, anyway, if the truth were known, Malvern had much more the popular side of the argument that had embittered the two men's lives. Trenholme, as indeed might be said of the whole Trenholme line, was a sour individual—fascinating enough when he chose to be, but terrible in his wrath when a spirit moved him to protest. Malvern, on the other hand, made friends easily, and kept them because of his charming manners. Everyone said that it was no wonder Alice Thorndyke preferred jolly little Malvern to the choleric Scot as Trenholme was dubbed by his friends.

So it was not particularly remarked when Trenholme spent the entire evening of the Claredale Country Club Ball in the billiard room, playing pool with Judge Kimball and Archie Belwyn, instead of dancing on the floor above. Malvern was certain to be there, basking in the smiles of the ladies, with his name on every dance card, while Trenholme, because the dance was always more of an obligation to him than a pleasure, would be sure to experience some difficulty in filling his card at all.

Outside, for it was early in December, a cold rain-storm lashed at the windows.

"Rotten night," Trenholme said suddenly, laying down his cue. "Rotten dull evening altogether. I don't know why I came out."

"And you've had exceptionally rotten luck," Belwyn said. "Never before saw you play so poorly, Trenholme. The weather must affect your game. I will admit it puts mine on the blink," he

counted his markers by laying them out with his cue. "Fifty, exactly," he announced. "Think I'll go upstairs and fling a foot." He moved toward the staircase. "See you all later."

Trenholme grunted something in reply and turning to Judge Kimball, he said, "I'll go you to a Scotch highball. I've a fair supply of stuff in my locker."

He handed the key to an attendant with instructions, and soon the two men were mellowing under the influence of the several drinks that followed.

"Hate all this dancing stuff," Trenholme confessed. "They'll keep it up all evening—all night—and I believe I'll duck. It's twelve thirty."

"Better stay," the Judge's eyes twinkled. "The pretty girls will soon come down here to join us. They get tired of dancing, after a bit, you know, I'm going to wait for Eleanor. She said she'd join me here—an hour and a half ago." He chuckled and caught Trenholme by the arm.

"No, no," Trenholme protested. "I'm going." He turned to Joseph, the colored attendant. "Get my things, Joe. Then I'm off."

Buttoning his heavy, thick, ulster well around his neck, stick in hand, hat settled firmly on his head,



He put his head
into the cab—
Ted Malvern was
dead

Trenholm went through the open door and a vicious purr of rain passed him on the way in. The door closed quickly; at that moment Alice Malvern came down the stairs.

"Have you seen Ted?" she asked the Judge. "He left me fifteen minutes ago and I haven't seen him since. They are playing 'Three O'clock in the Morning,' and I wouldn't miss this waltz with Ted for anything in the world."

"Haven't seen him," the Judge replied. "Too bad Trenholme just left. He'd have been glad to dance it with you," and with a smile that was more than half an old man's jest, the Judge watched her ascend the stairs slowly.

OUTSIDE, on the broad porch, Trenholme scanned the line of waiting taxis for one that would take him to his home, a half hour ride from the club. After waiting five minutes or more, on the wet, chilly porch with the cold rain blowing in his face, Trenholme fashed out with a curse and ran up and down the line of cabs, searching for a driver. None was to be seen. They were doubtless in the abandoned golf-house, hard-by, sitting around a fire. It was too early for them to expect a call. It was mighty exasperating.

The old Trenholme temper asserted itself.

Leaping into the driver's seat of the first cab, Trenholme hastily adjusted the curtains, and took matters in his own hands. He drove off, and somewhat later, perhaps around one o'clock, he drew up in front of his Cedar Avenue home.

As he stepped to the curb, under a street light, the

(Continued on page 27)



The next day Trenholme
appeared at the Claredale
Country Club with a
brand-new

"You Aint Done Right by Our Nell"

A Review by Webster Harwood

Constable
Doolittle has
been on the job.

"Have some
peanuts," says
Doolittle at the
wedding.

There is one young 'fel-
low who will stand with
Nell before the whole
world.

OUR NELL

OLD time touches from the theatre of a quarter-century since—the bits that made us boil with wrath at the villain, or weep with the lass that's betrayed, are served up in a very delightful musical "mellerdrama," under the title "Our Nell" at the Nora Bayes Theatre, New York.

The big delight of this show is in the lyrics—but the blase audience is often distracted from the stage. Interruptions come from some country cousin in a box seat who rears up and wants to form a posse to hunt down and hang up the dazzling stranger with the black mustache.

"Our Nell" arrives home unexpectedly from New York—so the story goes. She will not explain her sudden return. Even her forgiving old Grandpap believes something is wrong. He will forgive her—only why does she not tell her heart's secret. No—it is not that kind of a secret.

Dashing Dan has arrived in Holcumville—Nell's village—at about the same time as did Nell—in pursuit of some of his nefarious promotion schemes. It appears she has been employed by him in New York and has fled because she learns he is a swindler and finds herself incriminated.

The money-grabbing old Deacon is about to foreclose on Grandpap's homestead. Dashing Dan has involved the Deacon and now offers to lift the mortgage if Grandpap will persuade "Our Nell" to marry him. Grandpap persuades—many tears.

There is one young fellow who hasn't asked Nell "How come?" He will stand with her before the whole world and has loved her ever since she was a girl in gingham—before she learned city ways.

Come, the big wedding night. Constable Doolittle has been on the job, trying to get evidence and land his man—\$2500 reward—speaks to get hitched.

And a movie mad couple are busy. They help Doolittle but, alas, too late! The wedding bells have banged.

Into the scenery of Holcumville and the wild life of Doolittle drifts a wild girl. She is the wife of Dashing Dan, and she takes him home to the twins—right away from his latest bride. But first he has to live up to his agreement and pay off the mortgage—also to tickle the palm of Doolittle, who gets hitched O.K.

And the chore boy, who doesn't ask questions, makes a milk-maid of "Our Nell" for life down on the farm.

This is all of it, except the remark that the U. S. A., past and present, is richly kidded all the way from Los Angeles and its Hollywood flimsy colony to New York—in which latter place are "none but noble men who wouldn't wrong a young girl."

Dashing Dan has to
tickle the palm of Doo-
little who gets hitched
O.K.

Crooked

A HEAVY touring-car, painted a dark blue, crawled with the traffic stream northward on Broadway to the corner of East Eighth. There it turned westward, still proceeding at a snail's-pace until past Fifth Avenue, when, at a low voice from the tonneau, the great car leaped forward, turning the corner into Sixth on two wheels, lurched, jolting over the car tracks just ahead.

"Step on her, Red!" came the voice, in a vibrant undertone. "Give her th' gas!"

It was ten in the evening; the Avenue was brightly lighted; and, too, it was a Saturday night. The huge car had not been always painted that dark, retiring blue; its former owner would scarcely have recognized it save for the purring of that powerful motor, like a great cat; at three speeds forward it would cleave the rushing wind of its passage like a thunderbolt.

Now, following that first sharp burst of easy speed, the car slowed, turning down a narrow alley to the west. This was at Thirteenth. A great department-store, closed now for the day, loomed dark and silent, its rear end abutting upon the alley, but toward Sixth Avenue, if you stood back there in the darkness you saw life, roaring at full tide, with the clanging rattle of surface-cars, the booming roar of the "L" trains overhead; the lighted windows of lesser shops, open for the late trade.

At the corner of the alley there was life and movement; backward, viewed from the Avenue, was just a dim tunnel of gloom, whispering, sinister—or so it seemed. But there would be light enough to see that monster car, and the men around it; to a man looking, say, for such a car, it would be—a big thing to find.

The car had slowed down at the shipping entrance to the department-store. Three men alighted from it, furtive, sinister, slouch-hatted, with lean, strong faces, their movements soundless and swift.

"You fix it, Red,"—again the voice with that vibrant undertone came in a silken whisper. "Chi and me will go on up—and we'll be with you in a brace of shakes—How—"

Something huge and bulky—broad and flat—which had lain, covered with its dark gray cover, across the car top—came downward now with a sudden rush. A man grunted, heaved—there came the faint clink of metal upon metal—the lookout was alone.

A quick rip from a jimmy in a practiced hand—a downward thrust—and the two, Chi and the man who had first spoken, were inside. Creeping between the counters, they approached the jewelry section, where even in the darkness, there was a faint glimmer like a halo from the soft blaze of diamonds on velvet.

"Th' velvet, Slim—surest thing you know—that touch'll put us there—on velvet—but—that rummy watchman—what do you think—?" whispered Chi under his breath, his eye upon that opaque blackness, starred with stones.



"Quiet!" hissed Slim—the man with that tense, vibrant undertone—"You want to blow th' work, ha? Now—"

But "Chi" was not to be denied:

"That stunt of yours, Slim—that's sure th' cat's-whiskers, I'll tell a man!" he breathed. "Nobody else'd ever thought of it!"

"Shut-up!" grated Slim. They fell to work.

While below stairs in the alley the lookout, Denver Red, leaned nonchalantly against the wheel of that giant car. And while he leaned there, waiting, and the seconds sped on, down the Avenue there came the policeman on the beat.

HE was a young policeman—just past the probationary stage—the spoilers knew of it. Now, as he passed the alley's mouth he paused a split second, his keen, young glance boring into that glimmering tunnel, straight before his gaze, not fifty short feet inward to the great blue car, and the man leaning against the wheel.

It was a circumstance suspicious enough—the sight of that car there at that hour, and the man standing beside it. For further on, perhaps an equal distance beyond the waiting car, that alley met and intersected at right angles another street, and at each end of the alley there was a light—a wayside arc, its twin carbons blazing downward across the cobbles. This other street was silent, usually, tenantless—the marauders had little to fear from that direction.

But at its intersection with the Avenue the alley

"Power—your beat passes Thirteenth Street and the Avenue—Sixth, I mean—doesn't it?" rasped the inspector.

was, as one might say, open to inspection to all who passed.

The young policeman—he had yet to win his spurs—looked now, with his keen young gaze, straight inward to that waiting car, and the man standing beside it. Then—he passed on, swinging his club, whistling under his breath. For he had seen—*nothing suspicious*—it was as if a mantle of invisibility had cloaked that huge car, broadside to the alley, plain for all to see.

A moment now, and the workers in darkness were outside. There came a muttered word; a purring of that mighty motor, like the muffled beating of a heart, and they were away. But they did not leave by the way that they had come; rolling silently onward, the blue car, turning the corner into that further street, rushed forward now into the silence and the darkness of "The Village"—into the night, behind it, end to end, and side to side, that alley bare and empty under its twin, sputtering arcs.

II

INSPECTOR Haggerty frowned upward at the well-set-up figure facing him across the desk. The Inspector was a thick-set, square-jawed, grizzled official, with a frosty blue eye that could, on occasion, be as cold, as biting, as arctic ice.

Crooked Lane is a real Crook story—from the standpoint of a "rookie" policeman. And he uses the "direct action" method of solving his puzzle—one requiring courage.

Lane

BY HAMILTON CRAIGIE

It was a warm day in late August, but to the young patrolman facing the inspector the temperature of that room seemed close to zero; anyway, his heart in his boots, he listened now as Haggerty spoke, biting his words off short with what seemed to the patrolman a vicious emphasis:

"Power—your beat passes Thirteenth Street and the Avenue—Sixth, I mean—doesn't it?" he rasped.

"Why—yes—Inspector—" began Power, "but—"

With an inexorable certainty the Inspector continued, with a wave of his hand:

"—And there's an alley, isn't there, between Twelfth and Thirteenth—on the West side of the Avenue?—there is—it's still there, Mister Power?—Well—I wonder, now—"

Inspector Haggerty sat back in his chair, his eyes closed. Power, wondering, held his peace. Abruptly the inspector, springing to his feet, thrust a newspaper, folded to a flaring headline, under the patrolman's nose:

"Well—an' what of that?" he roared, his face a scant six inches from the officer's own. "What about that, eh?" he shouted, shaking the paper violently—then smoothing it out with a flirt of his thick thumb.

Power looked, the headlines shrieking their message at him in an eight column spread:

DARING DEPARTMENT STORE ROBBERY Thieves Make Rich Haul Police Powerless

For the third time within a month Dorfman's Department Store was the victim last night of a daring robbery, jewelry to the value of \$100,000 being taken. There is apparently not the slightest clue to the identity of the thieves, the police believe it to be the work of an organized band of loft burglars. But the crime wave continues; the police are powerless.

"See that?" shouted Haggerty. "'Police are Powerless'—I'm beginning to think they are—or they will be—Power-less, young fellow—" he laughed grimly at the pun—"if you can give me no satisfactory explanation of how you failed to see a single suspicious sign! Why," he continued, "they must have been right there in the alley as you were passing it. Hansen says he saw a car—a blue one—turn into the alley as he was making a pinch near the corner. He couldn't stay to see—but you must have come by there—well—are you dumb—what you got to say for yourself?"

He paused, glowering. Power cleared his throat, and Haggerty, inwardly approving, noticed that the blue eye met his squarely, look for look. And they were clear eyes—the blue eyes of a fighter, the inspector decided, or he knew nothing about men.

"Yes, sir, Inspector," said Power. "I'd just rung the box, sir, and I passed that alley a couple minutes afterward. I looked in, as usual, sir—just 10:06 it was; I gave a good look; I could see clear through to the other end; it's only a hundred feet; and there wasn't a thing there, sir—not a thing! The arc-light above where I was standing was all right, sir, and so was the one at the other end of the alley, but—"

HE stopped suddenly, a curious expression in his keen, good-humored face.

"Well, now, that's funny!" he continued, half to himself. "That's—funny!"

"What's—'funny'?" barked the inspector, hands gripping the arms of his chair, as if in visible restraint.

"Why—why—that I should have been there just at the time that car was in the alley—and—and I didn't see it, sir!" finished Power lamely.

The Inspector snorted.

"Do you mean to say it wan't there at all—better go easy, Power—Hansen's reliable—one of our best men—he noticed the time, too—you watch your step, young man!"

His tone hardened:

"And that's the third time that place has been cleaned—a hundred thousand in diamonds! Why—they'll be saying next we get a rake-off, ha? And—three times—and out, young fellow! Now—"

But at the look in the patrolman's eye he paused. "Well," he said, in a lower tone, "come clean—what's on your mind, ha?"

The rookie's mouth tightened.

"Only this, sir," he answered earnestly. "You give me a week—in plain clothes—to see what I can do, Inspector—just a week, and—"

The inspector smiled grimly. "You're pretty keen—f'r a rookie," he mused. "And—I can see you think you know something—after it's happened—Well—" his tone abruptly changed; the patrolman sensed it, "go to it, son—and—you bring home th' bacon, or—"

He left the sentence unfinished. Power, saluting, turned on his heel, in his eyes that curious look; the look seen sometimes in the eyes of a man who leads a forlorn hope—in the case of Power, however, the dawning of an idea, and with it a plan:

For there had been something that he had abruptly remembered—it had been on the tip of his tongue, but he had kept silent—and that some-

thing had to do with the alley, and that great blue car, and its dark-faced passengers.

For, now that he recalled it, there had been something wrong, something out of place: a twist, a kink, an incongruity—only he would not have called it that.

He left the station, his gaze thoughtful, while behind him, Haggerty, cigar held at a rakish angle in his clenched teeth, frowned after him at the closed door:

"Well," he muttered, under his breath, "we'll stand pat on that!"

III

PATROLMAN Power got busy the next day—Sunday morning—for the beginning of his investigation. For one thing: there would be no one in the alley at that time—and for another: "Detective" Power—detective for a week, at any rate, believed in beginning early. He had a week, and he meant to make every minute of it count.

It was scarcely to be expected that the thieves would be bold enough to make a fourth foray—but already the depleted jewelry stock had been made up; it had been fully covered by insurance—and—you could never tell.

After all, it might be an inside job, and then again, that question of the insurance kept knocking at th'

*The sun had cast a silhouette
against the dead wall.*



back door of his mind in spite of what he had seen, or, rather, had not seen.

Halting now at the Sixth Avenue entrance to the alley, as he stood peering ahead of him along the narrow way, he was aware for a split second of a shadow at his right; the sun, blazing from overhead, had cast against the dead wall, beside him, a sable silhouette; for a heart beat, out of the tail of his eye, the patrolman saw, or fancied that he saw, the thin nose, wide lips open in a wolfish grin; the peaked cap, pulled low over the forehead—then it was gone.

The patrolman, pivoting on the balls of his feet, saw—nothing. A trick of the sun, doubtless—and yet that Shadow, as he had seen it, could not have been cast save by a man peering around the corner at his back.

In two swift strides he was at that corner; if there had been a man there he would have seen him; but the avenue drowed in its early Sunday morning quiet; in the length of the long block south to north there were but two pedestrians, and neither of them wearing anything that resembled a cap. And both of these two were a good half block distant.

Power was unknown to the Underworld; perhaps a chance few—one or two "dips" with which the neighborhood was infested—these might have known him as a rookie, late probationer, and that was all.

But as he turned backward into the alley he was aware for a moment of a sensation of cold; the sunlight seemed flattened strangely to a heatless flaming of pale radiance. And then, peering down the short, deserted way, side to side, and end to end, he stifled a quick work in his throat.

There was the alley—no wider than the length of a large touring-car—ten or twelve feet, say, at the widest; and it was not longer than a hundred. The patrolman could see it, side to side, and end to end, from its intersection with the avenue, to its other end, and at each end it went no further. It was like the middle bar of an H, but it was not a blind alley, a cul-de-sac; ingress or egress could be had at either to or from it by means of the avenue and the street, intersecting it at either end.

The patrolman could see it along its length; it ran, straight as a string, east and west, whereas, before—

With his fingers upon the edge of the mystery, Patrolman Power uttered that word aloud:

"I've—got it!" he said, aloud, to the empty air, and then of a sudden it was not empty, filled with the quick singing as of angry bees.

Steel-jacketed bullets tore through the space his body had just quitted, boring into an iron warehouse door at his right like hammer upon anvil.

Power threw himself, face downward on the cobbles, his service pistol jerked from its scabbard. But the burst of bullets ended as suddenly as it had begun. It had been a plunging fire—from some roof-top, doubtless—that, in part, accounted for his being unhurt; a sniping fire, delivered from above, is never so accurate as when the marksman can see his target fair. And the man had, doubtless, been using a high-powered automatic with a silencer; it was extremely unlikely that it had been a rifle.

Another man, even a policeman, might have called it a day, standing not upon the order of his going, but the inspector's mental estimate of the young patrolman had been a bull's eye if the invisible marksman's had not. But it served to show, at any rate, that the thugs had been beforehand with him; they knew, at the least, what was his mission, and they meant to stop him, if they could. But that they suspected that he had solved the mystery—almost from the beginning—Power did not believe. Nor was he certain, even yet, that he held in his hand the key.

Waiting a moment, on the chance that someone might have heard the shots, Power went forward now into the alley's mouth, pausing at the spot where that great blue car must have halted on the evening of the robbery. It would be useless, besides being a waste of time, to investigate at the moment the source of that plunging fire—in that wilderness of chimney-pots spread in a wide-flung circle about him from north to south.

After the shooting he decided to go home and avail himself of the "plain clothes" privilege. It was a different appearing Power who came back to the alley.

A moment he peered about him to right and left; then, with an exclamation, he stooped, picking out of the dirt some objects that gleamed and glittered under the bright morning sun. He was getting warm, indeed; in fact, at that very moment, he was burning his fingers—Then, at a sudden step upon the cobbles, he whirled.

A MAN was coming toward him across the cobbles; behind him, from the shipping platform of the department store, the sheet-iron door had been rolled back a scant six inches; Power was not certain of it, but for an instant he had been aware of a face, like a white, glimmering oval, peering at him from the depths.

The patrolman waited, his hands in his pockets, as the man came forward. He was a rough, tough fellow of middle age, his face seamed and scarred, the skin the texture and color of mahogany. There was a surly menace in his attitude, his great hands, like stone mauls, balling into fists, as he said, low, out of the corner of his mouth:

"Well, Mister, an' what might you be doin' here, hey—gold-diggin'?"

Plainly the man had watched, himself unseen, as the patrolman had searched among the cobbles. For a moment an absurd suspicion that this might be the invisible marksman came to Power; then he dismissed it abruptly; the fellow had not the look of



He twisted and tugged inward—the door was fast!

a gunman despite the seamed face, the hard, decisive mouth. And yet—you never could tell—

But the patrolman for the moment had forgotten that he himself, in plain clothes, might be an object of suspicion; the dingy sweater, the shapeless slouch hat, pulled low over his forehead; the bristles showing on his unshaven cheeks—at face value he might have been a roustabout, a drifter, anything but what he was.

The man of scars came into action, following his words. He lifted a gnarled fist, reaching for the patrolman's shoulder. Whatever might have been his intention, Power did not pause to consider. The policeman was not a big man, to the eye, but beneath that shapeless sweater the broad, sloping shoulders hid bunches of muscle; something in the poise of the man might have warned the other, but the patrolman acted with the speed of light.

His arm shot out, the fingers closing with a grip of iron on the thick, hairy wrist; there came a sudden, brief explosion of movement; the man of scars knelt suddenly upon the cobbles, in his heavy face a queer expression of bewilderment and sudden fear.

The policeman's back was toward the building; consequently he did not see that iron door slide backward—the figure diving from the opening soundless and swift. . . . But in that flash of time he read the message in the eyes of his adversary; he ducked, extending his foot, and the body of his new assailant catapulted over his head.

The second man was crawling painfully to his feet, when the man in the dungarees rasped, out of the corner of his mouth:

"You win—old-timer!"

And then, to his reinforcement of one:

"Lay off, Bert; this ain't a prowler—I'll gamble on it—but—"

Power interrupted, with a crisp word. Honors were easy, but—you never could tell. The man of

scars was rising to his feet. Perhaps, after all, it might be—a trap. He said, low:

"All right—stand up—but keep your distance, you two! Now—"

He shot the words at them like bullets:

"—Where's that car?"

THE man in the dungarees grinned; then he said, with a humorous twist to his hard mouth:

"Oh—reporter, huh? Well—you're barkin' up th' wrong tree, mister—I'm telling you! Take a look?"

He turned back his coat, exposing his watchman's badge. "And—Bert here—he's my assistant—been with Dorfman's goin' on five years now—nossir—we aint crooks—not by a long shot! An' that blue car—well—she's one blue ghost—an' you c'n gamble on that!"

Power hesitated. He had been on the beat but a little while, and he had never seen the watchman. But the fellow's story seemed straight enough; anyway, it was easily verified, and a moment later, verification came with the arrival of the policeman on the beat.

To him, however, Power's warning eye-flash was enough, and more than enough. Peering into the alley on his morning round, he had seen the tableau; he knew Power. But he grinned behind his hand as he departed; Power's secret was safe with him, for all the good it might do the rookie, he reflected. But as he came out of the Sixth Avenue entrance to the alley he missed completely that which, as the young patrolman followed him, he recognized with a quick surprise and understanding.

But there were two things, rather than one:

Around the corner from the alley there was a large iron door—the entrance to a freight elevator—in it a smaller one, man-size; it swung open now; showing merely a black well of glimmering dark.

Power, peering within, glanced upward, to where, high up, and dark against the dingy skylight, a dim bulk loomed: the elevator. Usually, it would be at rest upon its snubbers. But it was not, because—it had been run upward, and there left by—the sniper who had pumped that clip-full of slugs downward to the alley, and the man beneath. That was why the patrolman had not seen that drifting Shadow; and that was why—

With an abrupt exclamation he stooped now, retrieving from the cobbles an object which he pocketed with hasty stealth.

And it was nothing more than a slender segment of silken cord. But the patrolman as he put it in his pocket was thinking of but one word, or, rather, three: Thug—Dacoit—and of these, the last and the most terrible, *Apache!*

V

SIX days of his week had passed, and Power, with the key to the mystery in his fingers, had yet drawn blank. He knew—he was certain of it—what had happened in that alley on that Saturday night; he could go to the Inspector with it—it was a big thing—a clever stunt, indeed—but—would it—be enough?

Power did not think that it would. He was on his mettle—and that meant not merely the solution of the mystery, but the snaring of the men—or of the man—who had made it possible.

Uninvited now, he was going to a rendezvous—it might very well be with death—at any rate, it could not fail to be with peril, real and not assumed; for that silken thread had furnished him with a clue, for that was all it was; a clue, a thread, perhaps, after all, drawn across his path by the gross spider who had put it there—the keen, devising brain which, out of its dim lair, might, at any moment, reach forth to maim, to slay—

For that silken thread meant but one thing; the presence of the thug, the dacoit, the strangler. Power knew it well enough; and now, as he turned the corner into a street gay with lanterns, oriental from the sidewalk inward and down, he was piecing together into a pattern, strange and varied, the things that he knew, that he had discovered: But here again he had drawn a blank.

HE had let it be known that he was in the market for diamonds; he knew stones; and following that attack there in the alley it had seemed that the only risk he ran was the risk of his job, his place in the Department. For he had been everywhere, and, so far, in safety.

But that man who had used him for a target had known that he was an officer; the tip that he had received—after all, there was nothing more likely than that it was a trap. In a saloon uptown a man

(Concluded on page 31)

GOOD PAPER

By MARCEL WALLENSTEIN

IT was dusk of the same day when a taxicab containing Goddard and Morehead drew up before a dingy building in a side street far down town. The banker had enlisted the assistance of the bank's private detective. With exacting care the forged check had been replaced in the book and the volume, apparently untampered with, returned to Brunen's shop.

As on previous occasions, the same sickly man had bought the book. This time he had been followed by Roth, the bank detective, who communicated with Goddard, the moment he had seen the man enter the building before which the taxicab now had arrived. Roth came over from across the street.

"He's been up there about ten minutes," he said, indicating the narrow stairway before them. "Shall we go up?"

They climbed the stairs to the second hallway, lined on either side by offices deserted for the night. A single gas light burned at the far end of the corridor where another flight led to the floor above, and up they went, Roth in advance, his employer and Morehead at his heels. Ahead of them a square of greenish gas-light was diffused through the ground glass of an office door, which bore the lettered information that this was the professional address of one Frank Snell, a practitioner of the law. Roth tried the door and found it locked. He knocked.

Presently the door was opened a few inches by the man Roth and Goddard recognized as Brunen's periodical patron. Obviously he was surprised at the late call.

"Well?" he demanded.

"We're looking for a Mr. Snell," announced Roth and pushed his way into the room before the man within could resist, if he were of a mind to do so. Goddard and Morehead followed.

The office was what they had expected to find, the dreary business quarters of a man who had never known success. They saw a flat top desk and near it on the floor a large iron cuspidor; a few chairs, a rusty leather lounge, its headrest hollowed by what must have been an almost continual burden, a case with four shelves of law books. A yellow diploma in a black frame hung above the desk, the single attempt to cover the soiled yellowing walls, and the floor was uncarpeted.

"My name is Snell," announced the attorney. "What can I do for you?"

As he entered the room Roth had seen the book he sought lying closed on the desk. Without replying to the lawyer, the detective strode to the desk and took up the book. He whirled about just in time to avoid Snell's futile rush.

"Get away from that!" Roth commanded sternly, grasping the lawyer's thin arm. For a moment Snell fought fiercely to free himself; but the pressure on his arm increased. He was helpless in the stronger man's grasp.

"Let me go!" he cried. "Put down that book, you—you thug!"

Roth forced him into the swivel chair before the desk, maintaining the grip on his arm and glaring down at his prisoner.

"I've got him, Mr. Goddard. Would you mind phoning the nearest police precinct? Or I can take him if you'd rather."

"Where?" gasped Snell. "Take me where?"

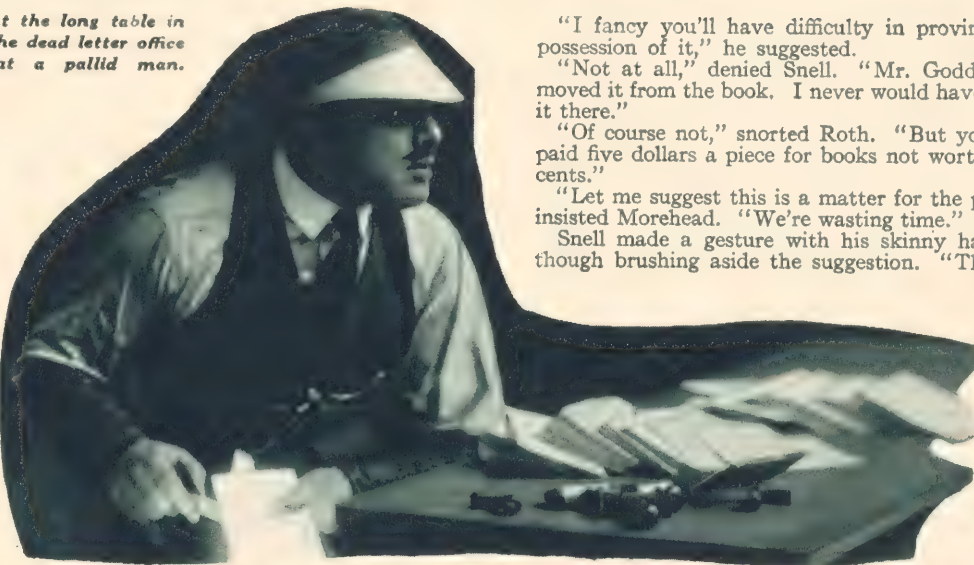
He turned and surveyed Goddard and Morehead, his terribly thin face twisted into an expression in which there was something of both misunderstanding and fear. He threw himself forward to his feet, only to be hurled back in the chair by Roth.

"Call your precinct!" raged Snell, "before I save you the trouble."

So far Goddard had been content to remain as a spectator to this unaccustomed sight. Now he came forward and took the book from Roth. The lawyer had made no attempt to remove the forged instrument. For the second time that day Goddard cut it away with his knife.

"This should be sufficient explanation of our presence," said Goddard sternly holding up the check before Snell. He turned and indicated Morehead. "This gentleman is the man whose name is

At the long table in the dead letter office sat a pallid man.



"I fancy you'll have difficulty in proving your possession of it," he suggested.

"Not at all," denied Snell. "Mr. Goddard removed it from the book. I never would have found it there."

"Of course not," snorted Roth. "But you have paid five dollars a piece for books not worth forty cents."

"Let me suggest this is a matter for the police," insisted Morehead. "We're wasting time."

Snell made a gesture with his skinny hand, as though brushing aside the suggestion. "The pur-

chase of a book proves nothing. Try and prove I knew of the existence of the forged check, if it is a forgery. Try and—"

"We'll try," promised Goddard gruffly and Snell was jerked to his feet by Roth.

"Wait!"

There was a pleading note in Snell's one word. He began to speak again but a fit of coughing took possession of him. Two fiercely red spots burned brightly above his craggy cheekbones; he pressed one hand to his laboring, tormented chest. Roth permitted the stricken man to sink into the chair, and presently he ceased coughing and dabbed at his lips with a handkerchief. Snell's bluff had ended. His hands fell listlessly in his lap. There was no more fight in him.

"You can take me to jail and cause me the expense and trouble of getting bail, but I tell you, you can't make a case against me," he said wearily. "You want a man for forgery. It will not help get him by arresting me. I admit I bought this book and others under what may be suspicious circumstances."

He hesitated and looked up at Goddard, then he asked, "If I explain my part in this, what then?"

"You know the law better than I," answered Goddard. "I am sure I can convince you I acted innocently," Snell continued earnestly. "I shall tell you everything and I can prove most of my statements."

He sank deeper in the chair, closed his eyes and seemed to be resting for a moment before continuing.

"It shouldn't be necessary to explain I am not a rich man," Snell resumed. "I've been ill much of the time and my practice suffered. I've had to take what business came to me and that's been precious little."

"Several months ago I received a telephone message from a stranger who said he was Edgar Barnes. He said he was too ill to come to my office and wanted me to come to his hotel that night on a professional matter. I found him in bed, his head swathed in bandages so that his features were completely masked. Only his eyes were visible. He explained he had been in an accident; I think he said he had been knocked down in the street. Then he asked my advice on a trivial legal question about a suit for damages. He paid my fee in cash and I started out when he called me back."

"He suggested he knew a way to make money, if he could rely on my discretion. He hesitated in approaching the subject, and I could see him watching me carefully between his bandages. But there was nothing, absolutely nothing criminal in the plan as he explained it."

"Once each month I was to go to a certain bookstore and purchase a book. I would be notified by telephone of the name of the book and the day

This story is immensely different so don't miss reading the conclusion in this issue if you haven't read the first part.

Goddard, a banker, has turned sleuth to assist his book dealer friend Brunen solve the mystery of a mysterious code, used, apparently, by unknown persons to communicate through the medium of books bought and sold in Brunen's store.

A drop of liquor, accidentally spilled, leads to the discovery that the signature of Morehead, a jeweler has been forged to a big check pasted behind the cover page—Read the rest.

to go for it. I was to bring it to my office where a stranger would call for it. Before parting with it I was to consult Page 104. There I would find a written memorandum for my information."

"Such as the 95 % C?" suggested Goddard.

"Yes; that represents a sum of money; in this case \$9,550. The letter C designating hundreds, coupled with the figures. Ninety-five hundred and fifty. Sometimes the letter M. for thousands was used. These figures represented the amount of the transaction. I knew nothing of the details. My part in the affair was to deliver the book, and several days later receive the amount designated on Page 104, minus a commission. I always knew how much the man who took the book from me should return."

"WHERE have you sent the money?" asked Goddard. The three men had listened intently to the lawyer's story, which he had related without hesitation or apparent effort to recall details.

"Never to the same place," continued Snell. "See here," the detective moved nearer, prepared for any treachery.

But it was only a harmless cardboard box that Snell took from the drawer. He removed the cover and handed the box to Goddard. It contained a score or more long envelopes, each typed with a different name and address.

As Goddard took the box he was immediately attracted by two broad red lines printed in red across the front of each envelope. These two scarlet bars, gave the envelopes a distinctive marking. The natural inference of a man receiving one of them in his mail would be that the sender had employed an unusual advertising pattern. Goddard asked an explanation.

"You know as much about it as I," declared Snell. "I was given the box containing these addressed envelopes that night at the hotel. After my monthly caller has taken away the book and returned with the money, I extract ten percent for myself. Then I place the remainder in large bills in one of the envelopes and send it through the mail."

Goddard cut in with another question.

"How did you know which envelope to use, since the addresses are different? I suppose you mailed them in some prearranged rotation."

"No. That is one of the details I don't understand. No one of them is addressed to the same name or place, you will see. My client specified no system. He told me to use my discretion. Evidently he has received the money, as there has never been a complaint and each month I have been notified by telephone the name of the book I was to buy."

He paused and looked from one to another of the three. Then he asked point blank. "Do you believe me?"

"I don't know whether I do or not," was Goddard's frank confession.

"Every word is as I have told it. I'll swear to it. Tomorrow morning the man will call for the book. I don't know him, not even his name. My client evidently directed him to me, and I have followed direction and asked no questions. If you will allow me I can prove that part of it."

The banker summoned Morehead into a corner for a hasty whispered conference. Then he returned to Snell, who had remained in his chair, a sick and discouraged man.

"You shall have a chance to prove your story," said Goddard.

All that night the bank detective kept the invalid lawyer under surveillance. It was nearing noon of the following day when Roth followed a man carrying the book from Snell's office to a hotel in the upper Forties. He waited outside the hotel until his quarry came out without the book and followed him again, this time to the Broadway branch of one of the city's best known banking institutions. As the man passed the check through a teller's window Roth arrested him.

Several hours later when his prisoner reposed in a cell following such an examination as only metropolitan police authorities fully understand, Roth reported to his chief.

"There's no doubt about this bird," he informed Goddard. Name's Benny Marquis, alias Behrens, alias Gerson. His picture and finger-prints are in the gallery at headquarters, and he's done two stretches."

"For forgery?" asked Goddard.

"WELL, as an accessory. He's what's known as a layer down. His part of the game is to establish himself with some bank, open up an account and keep it straight. Then when he gets

to be known well enough at the bank to disarm suspicion he shoots through the bad one and disappears. We worked on him for two hours and all he would come through with was he got the check out of a book, and the book from Snell. He stuck to his story that he doesn't know the master forger. Said he had received all his instructions by telephone."

"Shielding his pal of course," grunted Goddard. "I don't believe it, Mr. Goddard," dissented the other. "This Benny is the worst kind of a rat. He has the promise of a light sentence or even better if he comes through, and he's yellow enough to do it, too, if he only knew how. We got it on Benny and he knows it and would sacrifice his mother to pull himself out."

Nothing was more necessary to convince Goddard the man he sought was not a criminal of the moron type. Here, undoubtedly, was an intelligence which challenged his own. And Goddard who had developed the handful of loose change of his youth into his present magnificent fortune, rather prided himself on his ability to think a thing out.

He was thinking with more than customary speed



"Put down that book, you—you thug."

as he withdrew the box containing the scarlet envelopes he had confiscated the night before. There must be some vulnerable spot in this crook's armor. Perfect crimes and perfect criminals existed only in fiction. One did not have to be a mental heavyweight to realize the envelopes stood for something in this affair. As he spread them on the desk before him Goddard was prepared for the next move.

Briefly he advised Roth of his plans. Each of the envelopes, as Snell had said, was addressed to a different name and address. Choosing one of them which bore a name Goddard knew was fictitious and the address of a hotel in a New Jersey town, the banker informed Roth he would place several hundred dollars in currency in the envelope and mail it.

"It's worth much more to get our hands on this criminal," he told Roth. "I'll use real money. Otherwise our man would be notified someone is on to him should the letter fall into his hands. I'm not going to risk \$9,550 the amount of this last check, but the sight of real money in the envelope should quiet any suspicion. He can believe Snell double-crossed him, or that part of the money was stolen in transit, or anything he pleases."

"It's up to you, Roth, to grab him as the letter is delivered."

For three days thereafter Roth loafed about the dreary hotel of a New Jersey town. The man he sought did not arrive. The clerk who had grown old in his job had never heard the name, and showed Roth the scarlet striped envelope which he was

holding for the expected guest. Two days afterward Roth by subterfuge obtained the envelope containing his employer's money and returned to New York.

"We'll try another," declared Goddard, selecting a second envelope from the box. "We'll try them all, if necessary," he declared doggedly. "Here's one addressed to Henry Gibson, Kingston Hotel, White Plains. Start at once and I'll mail it this afternoon. If your man does not show up bring back the letter at any cost."

At the railroad station in White Plains Roth entered a taxicab and asked to be driven to the Kingston hotel.

"There's no such hotel here," answered the chauffeur.

"What?"

"Never heard of a Kingston hotel," continued the man. "I know every principal hotel in Westchester county and that's not one of them."

ROTH assured himself the driver had spoken the truth. There was not, nor had there been in the memory of the oldest inhabitant a Kingston hotel in the town. There was nothing to do but represent himself as Hugh Gibson at the post office, demand the letter and report again to Goddard.

The banker's chagrin was tintured with admiration when Roth had told of his second failure.

"A man as capable as this crook might have anything he wants," he said, and added, "I have no doubt he does have it."

A third envelope was selected at random from the pack, this one addressed to an Albany hotel. Before dispatching Roth this time Goddard made an inquiry by long distance telephone.

"No use, Roth," he related after the telephone conversation. "It would be another waste of time. There's no hotel of that name or any similar name in Albany."

The detective spread his hands helplessly.

"What do you make of it?" he asked.

"What do you make of it?" retaliated Goddard. "Crime is your specialty, not mine."

The repeated failure was making inroads on his complacency. It lacerated his pride. He had believed when entering upon this man-hunt it would be disposed of as swiftly and with as little conscious efforts as the hundred routine matters that came daily to his desk. He was not at all pleased either with himself or the bank's private sleuth and when the latter suggested, "Haden't we better turn it all over to the police?" he scowled and curtly refused.

That night the banker was preoccupied at dinner and after a futile attempt to be companionable his wife arose and stalked from the table. Presently Goddard went into his library and strode before one of his enormous bookcases and searched among his collection, one of the finest in the country. He wanted something in fiction that would illustrate the methods of the great detective. Perhaps the exploits of the geniuses who could determine from the single hair of a person's head the nature of the thoughts in that head might inspire him to a startling achievement in his own mystery. But his library was lacking in this sort of thing. There was Poe, of course, and he took down *The Gold Bug* and began a study of the solution of the cipher code in that engaging tale. That should get him in the proper frame of mind.

He reclined in his enormous chair, the book drooping from one hand. The thing to do, he decided was to take one line of reasoning and follow it to its natural conclusion. All the best detectives worked that way. Then he remembered that while pursuing this course the masters of deduction always found it necessary to cast out irrelevant theories and unimportant facts which obscured the issue. What were the unimportant facts here? Was old Mattie the means to the solution? Did the lawyer Snell know more than he had told? Could something of value be sweated from the man Roth had arrested? How did the red striped letters—?

The clock in Goddard's library chimed and he heard a servant moving about locking the doors for the night. He replaced the book and climbed the stairs to his bedroom. Those letters . . . he removed his coat and wai toat. How did the forger expect to realize from his crime if the money was sent to persons who apparently never received it? Goddard took off his collar and scratched the back of his neck. Why did the forger insist the money always be mailed in the distinctive red striped envelopes, thus attracting to it an attention which might result in its loss by theft?

Goddard entered his wife's bedroom, which adjoined his own. She lay in bed in a lacy negligee, a rose shaded lamp lighting the book in her hand.

(Concluded on page 29)

Midnight Dollars

BY C. S. MONTANYE

AT Fourteenth Street she left the train and went down the stairs. A few night-hawk taxicabs loitered under the shadow of the elevated structure. The girl eyed them with some concern. This was one of her hardest problems, for some of the chauffeurs who drove New York's conveyances had been gunmen and crooks in another day. Her fingers tightened over the handles of the bag again, and she shut her teeth resolutely against a little thrill of fear.

Presently she spied a cab of the Black and Gold corporation and signalled its uniformed driver. At least there was not so much chance in risking a taxi of the sort.

"Do you know where Pierrot Alley is?" she asked the driver.

"Yes, miss."

"Please take me there," she requested, adding the number and climbing in, the kit bag placed on the seat beside her.

Fourteenth Street was lighted by a few all-night lunch rooms. Tammany Hall, on the right, was a weather-beaten mausoleum deserted by its chieftains. Running directly west, the taxi passed the Academy of Music, gave a glimpse of Union Square for an instant, then wheeling sharply left, was on lower Fifth Avenue, its nose pointed in the direction of Washington Square and the eastern outposts of Greenwich Village.

This, the Latin Quarter of Gotham, was the Hobohemia whose citizens and devotees were artists, poets—a curious, nomadic tribe, differing from all others in mannerisms, speech, action and dress. Here was the Land of the Tea Room—strange, bizarre little places with misleading names—Captain Kid's Den, The Green Parrot, The Yellow Hound, The Candy Kitchen. Here also were shops and attics where the villagers sold their daubs, where art novelties were offered to the gullible and long-haired young men and short-haired young women congregated for gossip and cigarettes.

Further on the region was criss-crossed by streets so narrow as to permit the passage of but one vehicle at a time—blind courtyards.

The address the girl had given the chauffeur was one of these tiny thoroughfares—a straight, poorly-paved alley, hedged in by old-fashioned houses, some of which had suffered alterations of the same kind that had been visited upon the building in which Trant's rooms were located. The taxi stopped before one of these houses and the girl alighted.

The chauffeur paid and dismissed, she took herself and the kit bag into the vestibule. A latchkey opened the front door. She unerringly located the apartment in the rear of the first floor, used another key to gain admittance, and presently lighted a floor lamp with a heavily fringed Chinese shade. The room was comfortably but not pretentiously appointed, its furniture being of the variety known as mission oak. Perhaps its best ornament was a little baby grand piano, on whose polished top was scattered a heap of music and a quantity of pen and ink manuscript scores.

On the margin of these was written the name *Marion Blake*.

A single glance sufficed to show the girl with the blonde hair and blue eyes that nothing had been disturbed since she had left at noon that same day.

She nodded as if to express some unspoken thought and then knelt swiftly beside the kit bag. As she had suspected, it was locked; and to get at its contents was compelled to go into a miniature kitchen and return with a double-edged bread knife. With this she hacked and cut away one entire side of the kit bag and so at length was able to draw out of its maw the little satchel.

This was unlocked. She had only to snap back its English lever-latch and the treasure was before her.

With shining eyes she began transferring the packets of money to the floor, stopping only now

A mingling of dismay and terror swept the animation from her pretty face



and again to look breathlessly back over her shoulder as if she feared that in the background lurked some monstrous figure with outstretched hand.

It took some twenty minutes or more to learn that every dollar of the fifty thousand was intact. When this knowledge became apparent, she filled the satchel again with its green and yellow contents, stored it away behind a phonograph that was in one corner and then straightened up with a little exclamation of satisfaction.

Not until now did she seem to realize how inexpressibly weary she was, under what tension she had lived and moved during the topsy-turvy progress of the last two days. She seated herself on the divan and, after a minute, took a letter from a table drawer, or rather, the remnants of a letter, for the sheet of blue notepaper on which it had been written had been torn almost in half. With brooding eyes, the girl sat stiffly still for a cycle of minutes.

Presently she squared her shoulders and read the elaborately scrawled sentences that rambled across

Trant has become enmeshed in a maze of detail—a bag containing fabulous wealth, detectives and a girl. It is a battle for millions and in this installment Trant gets closer to the solution—if you go on with the story from here the girl and her bag take you into the very heart of the mystery.

the fragment of the note in the brightest and boldest of purple inking.

One side read:

—put off this matter any longer. You know what my feelings are and I feel sure you know the kind of a person I am when I get my temper up. I'm banking on you to use common sense and to realize the string is played out. In view of this—

Reversed the note continued:

—bring the fifty thousand dollars to the house mentioned. I will be there waiting and expecting you at five o'clock sharp on the day arranged. This is absolutely your last chance. If you don't make good on it you know what the penalty is. However, I feel confident that for your sake as well—

For a long time the girl sat staring at the words.

VII—"COME INTO MY PARLOR"

THE next morning was not auspicious. When the girl in the apartment on Pierrot Alley awoke and pulled aside the Batik drapery at the single window of her chamber, she looked out upon a morning made melancholy by drab and shoddy clouds that hung in a tarnished sky and gave promise of a storm. Gray though the morning was, the mood of the girl was as bright as the hair she expertly dressed, humming the meanwhile an elusive snatch of melody popular on piano rolls and phonograph discs. She assured herself that she had every reason to know the tingle of happiness that awoke a song in her heart.

Last night she had been too tired to know that she alone and unaided had achieved the seemingly impossible. Now, after seven hours of sound, restful sleep, the full significance of all that which she had attempted and won flooded her with keen happiness.

At ten o'clock she breakfasted on dishes prepared on an electric grill. At ten-thirty she tried, without success, to get a number in the upper East Side section of the city. After that she dressed in the blue summertime frock, placed the torn note in her beaded bag, and, when she was certain that the apartment was in good order, picked up the treasure satchel and let herself out.

She walked west as far as Sheridan Square, took the nearest Seventh Avenue subway entrance and descended into that tunnel which crawls like a worm through the rocky fastness of the island metropolis.

It was ten minutes of five exactly the same afternoon when she went up the front steps of a house on Forty-eighth street, the fifteenth house from the avenue, whose first and second floor windows were adorned with iron gratings. A press of the bell button brought no immediate response. At length she rang again, this time more successfully, for, after a short interval, the inner vestibule door of the house opened and a maid in conventional black and white appeared. The caller asked information which obviously the servant was unable to answer.

"I don't know where he is," she said. "If you will come in and wait, I will find out for you. What name shall I say, please?"

The girl with the blue eyes and blonde hair supplied it. She was ushered into a reception room to the right of the entryway and asked to wait. Seating herself, with the maid's ascending footsteps dwindling on an upper landing, she surveyed the room with no little curiosity. It was a chamber of fair dimensions, beautifully appointed in the prevailing mode. Its furniture was expensively subdued, charming pieces upholstered in some delicate tapestry, colored with the faintest of pastel tints.

Underfoot a thick Oriental rug sprawled like a shore-intruding wave of color. The walls were in square panels, hung with a tapestry that composed the furniture's upholstery. Wall sconces had little shades, and a stately mirror in a far corner gave back the vista of the chamber in all its fascinating luxury.

The visitor had just finished a cursory inspection when the maid appeared in the doorway.

"Please come with me," she requested briefly.

The girl with the blonde hair and blue eyes nodded and fell into step beside her. They went up a wide margined staircase, through a void of silence in which their muffled steps sounded dully, to the floor above. Here the very faintest suspicion of aromatic smoke spiced the unstirred air. The little maid led the way down the corridor, opened the door at its furthest end and stood aside.

"The gentleman will be right down."

This second room was a library, walled in with glass-enclosed bookcases, each crowned with the

pallid bust of some celebrity. Its double windows were drawn to the August afternoon and overlooked an immaculate back yard, where a small, dwarf pear tree flourished. The maid closed the door of the room after her. The caller sat down in a deep leather wing chair and gave herself up to a series of speculations. Some thought of her own deed flushed her cheeks and made her eyes misty. Surely, she told herself, in doing what she had done that morning, last night, yesterday, she had fulfilled a task which had become a duty—since that hour when she had first learned!

FOOTSTEPS and the turn of the door knob snapped the thread of ruminations. With parted lips and shining eyes, the girl jumped up, bending eagerly forward. The door opened and a fat, pink and white gentleman entered, shut the door carefully behind him and turned to the girl with a smile. Like a black cloud passing over the face of the sun, a mingling of dismay and terror swept the animation from her pretty face. She fell back, still staring in horrified amazement, her suddenly dry lips at last able to form one sibilant word:

"Sanford."

"The name," the man stated blandly, "will do as well as any. You did not expect to find me here, did you? My dear, it is the totally unlooked for occurrence that gives life a piquant flavor. Let us sit down and discuss matters with all confidence. I rather expected you."

The girl's first shock of bewilderment ebbing, she moistened her lips and let the hand she had placed at her breast drop limply at her side.

"Where—where—," she faltered.

Sanford wedged his bulk into a chair, crossed his legs and produced a platinum cigarette case. He leaned back comfortably, struck a match for a cigarette and exhaled a spiral of blue smoke.

"Where is the gentleman you came here to see? Truthfully, I have no idea. I understand he was here earlier in the afternoon but departed several hours past. However, I feel reasonably confident that I will see him again shortly."

"What do you mean?" the girl asked unsteadily.

The fat crook grimaced.

"I mean," he replied, with a sudden change of tone, "I've wasted more time on this affair than I had a right to. I mean that this town is becoming a little too torrid for me in more respects than one. I can't tarry longer. Now, coming directly down to cases, I'm curious to know what your intentions are. First, what did you do with the satchel and the money? Where is it? You didn't turn it over to him, I know. Where is it?"

The girl, who had her back against one of the bookcases, turned her defiant eyes upon him.

"The money," she said clearly, "is where you can never get it now!"

A shade of red wiped out the pink in Sanford's moon face. Standing, he seized her roughly by the arm and drew her to him.

"You tell me where that bag is," he rapped out savagely. "I've had quite enough of your interference, young lady! I've reached the end of my patience, and for your own good you'd better speak out, and speak out quickly! Where's the satchel?"

Wincing, the girl shook her blonde head.

"Where you'll never be able to get it!" she repeated.

Sanford's narrowed eyes flashed.

"That's final?"

"I'll never tell you!"

He released her, shrugged, and touched a bell button in the wall near the door.

"I think you'll change your mind, my dear. At least you shall have plenty of opportunity to think it over carefully. I am not a pleasant person when I am aroused, though ordinarily my disposition is as sweet as trailing arbutus. I'm not threatening you when I say I will stop at nothing to get that satchel. Think this over and—"

"ONE MOMENT WAS ENOUGH"

By Robin Stage

next week

Another of those famous

"Dr. Blitz" Stories



HE was interrupted by a knock on the door. Followed, the entrance of a mild-faced, grave-eyed woman with gray hair. She was attired in a high-collared dress of some plain material and carried a freshly ironed apron over one arm.

"Did you ring, Mr. Sanford?"

The stout man nodded and indicated the girl with a gesture.

"This is the young lady I was speaking to you about, Mary. She is in a somewhat obstinate frame of mind. I have several things to do and so I can't stay and keep her company. I want you to keep an eye on her until I return. You understand that it is necessary that she doesn't get away."

The woman bowed and turned to the girl.

"Will you come with me, Miss?"

Sanford consulted his watch and discarded the stub of his cigarette. Through the girl's mind a medley of thoughts raced. It would be useless to struggle or attempt to escape. She had been neatly trapped and must make the best of it. The satchel with the money had become a thing that affected her in two different ways. She was safe so long as Sanford's present mood prevailed. But what would happen when she steadfastly refused to divulge its whereabouts? Experience had taught her that the fat man was a relentless foe.

Her last impression as she turned and left the room accompanied by the woman with the grave eyes, was of Sanford's cherubic smile.

Her destination proved to be on the top floor—a room that was small, windowless and lighted only by a half-opened skylight protected by iron bars. It was sparsely and plainly furnished, containing a cot, a chair, a small table and a dresser. Its lock was new and shiny, a patented, burglar-proof affair, that stood out conspicuously. The woman ushered the girl in.

"I'll get you something to read," she said.

She went down the hall to a closet and returned with a dozen magazines, which she placed on the table; then, without further comment, she withdrew, locking the door behind her.

It was now twenty minutes past five. An hour dragged by. The girl skimmed through the magazines not with any high interest. Her thoughts were all engaged with Sanford and the recollection of his conversation. From what he had said in the library, it was feasible to believe that he was also preparing a trap for the person she had come to this house to see. She closed her small hands tightly and drew her red nether lip in under the vise of her white teeth.

It was maddening to think that this Sanford should roam the jungle trails of the humming metropolis free and unhindered. It was maddening to have to sit back with folded hands, while his plots were put into practice. Sometime, somewhere, she had heard something about Right triumphing over Wrong, but in this particular instance it seemed villainy had its own reward. True, she had snatched the satchel with the money and had placed it out of his reach, but even that, at this minute, did not balance the indignity of her present predicament—the fear that Sanford would carry out his statement and capture this man whom she had been told had visited the house several hours before her own

arrival. She looked at the bars across the skylight in black despair.

VIII—A CHANGE OF BASE

AT fifteen minutes of seven the woman who had conducted her to the chamber unlocked the door and came in with a tray containing a pot of coffee, some sliced cold chicken, a salad and a jar of jelly. Surprised at her hunger, the girl ate heartily. Once or twice she hazarded a question, but the woman, who remained standing near the door while she ate, shook her head silently. Presently she bore the tray away, locking the door. The twilight of the August day, accented by the gloom of the afternoon, began to flicker out. The mouth of the open skylight darkened. Street noises crept in eerily—the backfire of an automobile, the distant, tinny blare of a phonograph, the drone of the great city. A number of times the telephone tinkled somewhere in the house, indistinct voices blended and died away, a door slammed below.

Nine o'clock came and passed. The little room was now filled with a velvet darkness. Somewhere between the half hour and ten o'clock footsteps sounded along the hallway outside, the burglar-proof lock snapped back with a loud metallic click and the voice of the grave-eyed woman sprayed the gloom.

"Mr. Sanford has returned. He wishes to see you downstairs in the library."

Obediently, though not without the stirring of her pulses, the girl followed the woman down the stairs again and into the bookcase-lined room. Her chubby Nemesis, a tweed motoring cap at a jaunty angle on his head, was thumbing a telephone directory. Across the room a black-visaged youth in a shabby and worn suit puffed on an inch of cigarette and darted an interested look at the girl as she made her entrance.

Sanford found the number he was seeking and turned the directory face downward.

"You've had plenty of time to think it over," he began easily. "Plenty of time, so what's the answer? Are you going to tell me where I can find the satchel or are you going to continue to brazen it out?"

The girl lifted her face, which was suddenly flushed with warm color.

"I'll never tell you!" she reiterated.

Sanford stared at her for a long minute, expressionless. Finally, he moved his bulky shoulders and nodded briefly to the youth across the room.

"Take her down, Chick. I'll be with you as soon as I put this call through. Give her the gat if she opens her mouth."

He turned his back and picked up the telephone, reversing the directory and bending to find the number. The other occupant of the room crossed to the girl, caught her wrist and half pushed, half led her across the threshold of the library. When they were out in the corridor, he turned his bright, ferret-like eyes full upon her.

"Listen," he drawled succinctly. "Me and you is goin' downstairs. The boss has got his bus outside. The two of us will have to blow across the sidewalk to get into it. You heard what he told me. If you start anything or make a squawk, I'll have to use my rod. Get me?"

When they were near the front door and the lower landing, he dropped her wrist, wound his arm around hers and looked down at her earnestly.

"Girlie, if you've got any sense at all you'll be a wise doll and put a muffler on the lip music from now on until we hop the gas buggy. Honest, I'd hate to be rough with you, but orders is orders. You ain't going to make me use the artillery, are you?"

The girl swallowed.

"N-no, I think not."

He beamed at this.

"That's what I call sense. I knew you was a pretty wise Jane the minute I lamped you. All right then, let's go!"

He shot back the bolt on the front door with his free hand and turned the knob. They crossed the vestibule and went down the stoop steps. At the curb, a limousine stood like a black rock in the darkness of the street. When they reached it, Chick opened the tonneau door, ushered her in and sat down beside her.

"I have to stick around until the skipper shows up," he declared. "Say, why don't you loosen up and tell him where the satchel he wants is at? If you do, you'll spare yourself a peck of trouble. He's a good guy when things is goin' his way, but when you cut in on his deal he's apt to lose his temper and get mad. Then there's the devil to pay. Now, you're a pretty wise chicken and a

sweet lookin' frail, and it's too bad you're in a jam. If I was you, I'd tell him where you've got the satchel parked and call it a day. He'll let you go then and there won't be no more monkey business."

"Do you know what the satchel contains?" the girl had the courage to inquire.

The youth rubbed his beard-rusty chin.

"Kale, I suppose. But what's money when you're liable to get mugged up? You can always get more jack, but what can you do if the chief gets mad and takes all the spirit out of you?"

The girl threw up her head.

"He wouldn't dare!" she cried throatily.

THE other chuckled. "Wouldn't he, though. It's easy to see you don't know him. Take tonight—just a while ago—and the nifty he pulled. Some guy is his mark and set-up. He wants to nail him and that ain't no cinch with the bulls on the limp behind. But does that worry the boss until he gets as thin as a dime? I should hope to tell you it don't. He picks up Eddie Sharkey and the three of us roll down to the club where this gay chappie is at. The boss and Eddie get out and take a walk to the corner and back. Pretty soon the lad comes out and looks for a taxi. While he's doing this, the chief marches up on one side and Ed

HIS CODE

By

Blanche Goodman

A Real Short Story

Next Week

on the other. Ed asks for the loan of a match and while the victim is getting it, the boss slides up and sticks the nose of a gun up against his back, under his coat. And with people passing every now and then, mind you. The lob sees it's curtains for him if he starts anything, and it ain't hard to persuade him to get into this car. He's inside now with Eddie mindin' him. I don't know if he's comin' with us—"

The appearance of Sanford waddling down the steps ended the explanation. He opened the side door of the tonneau. The fat rascal entered, and, with a sharp look at the girl, sat down beside her.

"O. K.? We'll start immediately, Chick. Eddie and the rest will follow along in an hour or two. I wish," he added with a sharp laugh, "I could see that dumb O'Keefe's face when he crashes in—if he does—and finds we've stolen away. Why, Mary told me that when he stopped in this afternoon he was like an infant in arms—swallowed everything she handed him and marched away like a perfect gentleman. But let's get going—"

Chick crawled in under the wheel and a minute later, the limousine had backed, wheeled, and, crossing Sixth Avenue, turned into Broadway sharply and shaped a course northward. Crouching back in her corner, the girl watched the carnival of Broadway. She heard Sanford's throaty chuckle when they passed a cafe across whose Spanish facade were the words *Chanson d'Or* in incandescent letters. Columbus Circle crossed, the car continued on uptown. Sanford said nothing until they had gone down the slope from Columbia College to Manhattan Street and were ascending the incline over which stretched the lofty subway scaffolding at that point.

"I'm taking you," he explained punctiliously, "to a certain little retreat of mine known as Plunder Island—a charming spot just far enough from the city to be remote and yet not distant enough to be inconvenient. Inasmuch as you refuse to tell me where the satchel is, I am reluctantly forced to adopt measures that will compel you to. Do I make myself plain?"

The girl leaned a little forward.

"I'll never tell you," she vowed. "You'll regret this outrage! There is such a thing as the law, and it is only a question of time before—"

Sanford interrupted her with another of his short laughs, produced a cigar, bit the end of it off and lighted it.

"The law," he averred, "has never bothered me to any great extent. I might even say, I ignore it.

If you're counting on that, I would strongly advise you to get the notion out of your head. This isn't a six-reel thriller or a best-selling novel where the heroine is rescued at the crucial minute. This is real life in which the debonaire gentleman of fortune—myself—cops the satchel and exits smilingly, after he has forced the fair young lady concerned to tell him where she has it hidden."

The girl made no response to this extravagant statement.

An hour later the limousine had invaded that section of Westchester which lies between Pelham Bay Park on the south and Larchmont on the north. Here, at intervals, the misty sweep of the Sound was visible, pin points of light that were nestling hamlets on the Long Island shore line, the obscure mystery of the sea and the stealthy quiet of the countryside. The limousine traversed a long, quiet stretch of road that ended at a cove where one or two dismal shanties huddled together like witches conspiring. The limousine was apparently expected, for a man came out of one of the shacks with a lantern and had a lengthy conference with Sanford, who, scrambling out of the car, led him out of ear-shot and spoke earnestly with but few gestures.

At length he returned to the motor and offered his hand to the girl.

"Run the car around back of Maguire's," he said to Chick, "and be sure you put the lights out and lock it." Then, to the girl again: "Be careful how you walk. We're going to take a ride in a pretty boat. This way."

They reached the shore of the cove and a flat wharf about the same time a long, low motor boat came out of the darkness to the left of the shack described as Maguire's place. This accomplished, Chick climbed in first, relieved the same individual who had come out with the lantern and held the craft steady to the wharf while Sanford assisted the girl in and dropped down after her.

"All right, Chick, my lad. Step on her."

The motor boat responded to the opened throttle and sprang away with commendable alacrity.

IX—THREADS OF MYSTERY

IT seemed to Trant as he stood with the receiver to his ear and the monotonous voice of Central continued to ask the number wanted, that Fate had erected a stone wall directly in front of him which he could neither scale nor surmount. The voice of the girl with the blonde hair and blue eyes, a hesitating whisper out of the summer night, filled him with a hundred tingling thrills, little different from the sing of the wires and the stirring and buzzing in the receiver he continued to futilely retain.

She was in trouble—in some way she had managed to get to a telephone and call him. She had been discovered while speaking—

After what seemed an interminable period of time, he was connected with the district manager of the telephone company. His request that the incoming number be traced resulted in a ten minute wait, during which time he dressed, torn by suspense. At length the telephone tinkled again and he was informed politely that the incoming call had not been located. He was assured that on the morrow, or the next day, if anything was learned, he would be promptly advised.

Trant hung up savagely and went to the window.

Now it became imperative that Headquarters be made familiar with the turns and twists of the day. He used the telephone once more, called Spring 3100 and was informed, after some delay, that plain clothes detective O'Keefe was at present "on a case," but that he would be sent up some time between nine and ten the next morning. For the last time that night Trant pushed the telephone from him, lighted a cigarette and smoked with knit brows.

In the darkness there was a single ray of light, one concrete and solid clue that might be used as a base of operations—this, the house on Forty-eighth street. The building, Trant told himself, was closely woven into the fabric of the plot. There and there only was the slight chance that he might stumble upon a loose thread, some gleaming of information that could fit in with that which already was known. To go there on a chance, no matter how slender, was infinitely better, he decided, than cooling his heels in a frenzy of impatience and awaiting the dawn of a new day and the advent of O'Keefe.

Trant pulled on a cap, shut and locked the windows and let himself out.

New York was tucked in bed and had the coverlet up to its chin. Overhead the sky stretched darkly blue, lighted only by a few wan stars. It was some-

what cooler, giving the promise that the next day would be less humid.

Trant walked through to Madison Avenue and, after a wait of some duration, took a downtown surface car. He alighted at Forty-eighth street and walked west. Ahead, in the distance, Broadway still glowed, but now like a bonfire that was slowly burning itself out, leaving on the hearth of the haggard night a few smouldering incandescent jewels. The block itself, east and west, was quiet and vacant with the exception of a man in evening attire who wended a blithe, if somewhat uncertain, homeward way. Trant glimpsed his white shirt front and thought of Barry Grantley. That Sanford could command the situation in such high-handed fashion sent fresh waves of anger creeping through him. On the face of it, it seemed absurdly impossible.

But yet—

The house with the iron gratings was wrapped in darkness as profound and absolute as those in the row that marched beside it. Trant slowed his steps as he passed it. He wondered if this was not entirely a fool's errand—this hope that there was something to be learned behind its closed and locked doors. He went on another pace or two, then turned, ascended the brownstone stoop steps and, with lips compressed, placed his thumb against the bell. Very far away he heard the bell ringing—closer, the pant of a motor that had turned into the street and was stopping briefly a few yards away ere it was off again to the tune of a slammed door and the whine of shifted gears.

Trant began to renew his assault upon the bell about the same time he heard the squeak of shoes behind him, and over his shoulder glimpsed the face and features of a man that was coming up the steps. He dropped his hand from the bell and gave vent to a single word:

"O'Keefe!"

THE plain clothes man reached the top step, shaking his head.

"Not much use in ringing, Mr. Trant. I don't think there's anybody home. There would have been if a woman with a pretty smooth line hadn't given me a bum steer this afternoon. And me, like a dumbbell, taking it all in. No matter—now. I've got my number twelves planted on the right track. We've been watching this house for sometime. Let's do a little second story work and see if our mutual friend Sanford left anything behind—"

"Sanford?" Trant exclaimed. "Is this Sanford's house?"

"So I found out about an hour ago," the other replied dryly. "It used to be a gambling joint, run by a man named Ferguson. When we closed him up, the house was sold to a Mrs. Millam. Women are foxy, aren't they? That's what put me off the trail—that Mrs. Millam stuff. And it was only an hour ago that a pal of Harrigan's, with a memory as long as an East Side clothesline, happened to mention the fact that this Mrs. Millam is also Mrs. Sanford—even if she does live in a hotel over in the white light district. Harrigan's looking her up now. He's a great boy when it comes to getting the speaker sex to chirp. He's going to phone me here as soon as he gets any news."

In the vestibule, still chatting, O'Keefe, with the aid of a pocket flash, began fitting keys of various sizes and shapes to the lock on the inner door. Trant watched him with mingled emotions. Was it possible that at last justice was to have an inning and the career of the fat rogue abruptly ended? There was a certain jauntiness in the detective's bearing and monologue that seemed to indicate this.

"The reason why I figured the nest was empty," the plain clothesman rambled on, "was because I tried to get this house on the wire three times in the last hour and got a 'don't answer' on each occasion. Not only that, but the garage where Mrs. Millam keeps her car reported that her chauffeur, an ex-ganster who's known as Chick Evans, paid a two months' bill this afternoon and told the garage proprietor his employer was giving up the space because she was going out of town. I figured that Sanford was being pressed a little bit too closely and knew that if he hung on for another twenty-four hours we'd land him. He's sharp, all right—knows there's bound to be a show down sooner or later. Ah—"

This exclamation of satisfaction was synchronous with the click of the front door lock as the key turned it over. O'Keefe pushed the door open and let his flash move slowly about.

"We'll just take a slant around. There's some chance that Sanford had to leave in such a hurry that he didn't take some of the stuff he's been piling up for the last few months. Harrigan told

you the other night that he is a con man, wanted on a charge of swindling, but that was letting him down easy. As a matter of fact, Sanford's a kid glove crook who used to be the head of an organized gang; the kind you read about in books—until he got married and staged some of this lone wolf stuff. There's a half dozen robberies in this town he engineered through. I wouldn't hesitate to say he's the cleverest crook we've ever been up against. But we've got him now—sooner or later we get them all. It's a queer game. They know what their chances are and what the penalty is, but they try to get away with it just the same. Hello, it looks like there was a scuffle in here."

"Here" was a reception room to the right of the entry-hall upon whose upturned furniture O'Keefe's torch dwelt. He turned on the wall sconces for a minute, nodded grimly, and went up to the floor above. In the library that overlooked the backyard he drew the shade, made a light and waved Trant into a chair.

"Mind waiting a few minutes while I scout around? There's the telephone over there. If Harrigan calls me tell him to hold the wire. I want to have a look at the top floor."

He was gone with a nod, leaving Trant to contemplate the bookcases that lined the room—bookcases filled with the treasures of the bibliophile in rich leather bindings, lettered in gold. Trant eyed one or two sets before seating himself. A subtle excitement gripped and warmed him. Once Sanford was captured, the riddle of the girl who had telephoned would be cleared up—the puzzle of Barry Grantley as well. So far as the girl herself was concerned, what would he find? Would she prove to be an adventuress, a bird of the same plumage as Sanford himself? Trant shook his head. He felt, though he had no way of knowing otherwise, that she was Innocence in all its untarnished trappings. The force of circumstance, he was sure, and that alone had plunged her into the whirlpool of shadowy events. When the denouement came, and the final curtain fell, he was ready to take an oath that he would find her guiltless.

"Otherwise," he thought, "why should she telephone for assistance?"

O'Keefe's returning footsteps aroused him. The plain clothes man entered, a fresh cigar tucked away in the corner of his mouth.

"Nothing upstairs," he said. "I didn't bank a whole lot on finding any of Sanford's plunder here. I've learned from experience that most of these kid glove artists sink the swag out of town. New York's too dangerous to cache their swipe in. They're hampered, cramped for room and—"

THE shrill ring of the telephone across the room interrupted. With a glance at his watch, O'Keefe crossed to it, picked it up and spoke. Sensitive to the fact that a climax impended, Trant bent forward. After naming himself, the plain clothes man listened intently, grunted a few times and rang off. For all of his brusqueness, there was a note of elation hidden in his dispassionate voice when he spoke:

"Harrigan got the dope. Sanford's hang-out is an island three miles out in the Sound, off the boundary line of New Rochelle. He's taking Mrs. Millam downtown and he'll be back to pick us up in one of the department cars as soon as possible."

"While we're waiting," Trant said, "I'd like to tell you a story."

"Shoot," he invited.

Beginning with his return from the Berkshires, and the discovery of the satchel in his closet, Trant spun the tale of his adventure of the past few days and nights. O'Keefe was a good listener, stopping him only once, and then to make a point clearer. When Trant finished he tapped the ash from his cigar and inclined his head.

"I was sure that Sanford had a big deal on deck. Fifty thousand dollars, eh? It would have to be a money break to keep him in this town. I can't figure where Grantley fits in or who the girl is, unless she is a fly pennyweight who picked up the tip on the dollars and is out to spear them herself."

"I'm sure she's not," Trant interposed. "If she was, why should she call on me for assistance?" O'Keefe shrugged.

"Calling on you don't mean anything. The chances are that Sanford nabbed the boodle and she thought you might help her make a fight for it—inasmuch as you've got something to even up against our fat friend yourself. Say, by the way, young Grantley works for his uncle, don't he—Page, the big banker down on the Street?"

"Yes; why?"

(Continued on page 31)

Ask Madame Pythagoras She Knows

HUNDREDS of letters have poured in, and Madame Pythagoras asks everyone to be patient and to watch the columns of "Midnight Mystery Stories" for the answer to their inquiries.

All will be answered as rapidly as possible. No one can have a private answer, so do not send stamped envelopes. Write briefly and plainly. State what initials or other means of identification you wish used for your delineation.

Dear Friends—

Here we are again. Some weeks we are so short of space that this department gets crowded out. You see, it is impossible to cut off a story right in the middle of an exciting situation—leaving you in suspense for a week before you discover whether the heroine, hanging on the coping of a twenty-story building by a single hair, ever gets on terra firma again, or whether the mysterious bandit, masquerading as a ghost, is discovered in time to save the whole family from extinction. But this department can wait. Your name is your name. You've got to stand for it more or less anyway. If its vibrations are good—well, they'll keep on vibrating that way. And if they are bad, a week more or less isn't going to make or break you, is it?

But we always stage a come-back, so watch for us. Maybe you're here. And, in the meantime, accept best wishes for a Happy Holiday time.

MADAME PYTHAGORAS.

ELOITA D.—Your name is too pretty to be abandoned for that rather ugly nickname you say your aunt wished on you, although it does stand for originality and new ideas and everything. But your name as you sign it is very good, too. You have tact and order in your acts and habits, and impetuosity and energy in your ideas and tastes—it makes you a bit complex and contradictory, but, still, you always go through with what you start—and that's something.

□ □ □ □ □

F. L. N.—BALTIMORE.—No—no, indeed, my dear—that picture in the former issue of MIDNIGHT is NOT I—far be it from that. That picture represents the editor's idea of what a seeress of the Nile might have been centuries ago—presumably. But my ancient ancestor was not an Egyptian, but a Greek—and, anyway, I don't look like him. This picture was posed by a stage beauty who dresses—I mean undresses—like that for an Oriental dance with which she charms the snake—I mean the patrons of the theatre—and that's that.

Now as to your name. You have an inquiring, persistent, studious and intuitive type of mind—you have a good mind. I think you are a bit too mental—you should balance up with more physical activity—exercises and outdoor sports, and that sort of thing. Thanks for your compliments.

□ □ □ □ □

MARIE K. S., Montana.—You have a well-balanced combination of numbers, except for one thing—you lack a certain methodical, practical stick-to-it-iveness. You plan a lot, but you do not carry it out. You have intuition and your impressions are accurate. You can do many things fairly well—but do not stick to one point or purpose long enough. At least, so says your P. of L.

□ □ □ □ □

O. W., Milwaukee.—No charge. Also no personal answers. You are inclined to be moody and restless. You are anxious to learn and ambitious to do things. You are generous and kind-hearted. You would be happiest married. The thing that you most lack is tact. You are outspoken and so make mistakes that might be avoided if you would stop to think it over.

□ □ □ □ □

H. L. B., Philadelphia.—You have an odd combination of vibrations, H. L., and they should be successful, because you've got what the efficiency experts allude to as "pep and push"—not that I'd ever use such language myself—not I. But you know what I mean. You should be a salesman, welcome in every household—or business. Hold, I think I should say, you have humor and impetuosity and originality and a great "line of talk"—uh-huh! Yes! 'Tis so. You've a three for humor, a one for originality and a nine for push—and there you are.

The Trenholme Temper Dies

(Continued from page 15)

officer on the beat, spoke to him.

"Drivin' a cab now, Mr. Trenholme?" the man said in a bantering tone of voice.

"Yes," Trenholme smiled in spite of himself at the picture he, Henry Trenholme, must have presented to the officer's mind, as taxi-driver. "Couldn't find the driver at the club so I took the thing myself. I'll make it right with him in the morning. If you find a man looking for a cab, tell him I've got it."

"I'll go around and tell him; can't drive myself," said the officer.

"Fine," Trenholme replied. "Good-night."

"Good-night, sir," and the officer was off.

By this time Trenholme was quite recovered from his burst of temper. He half-regretted that he had acted so hastily. He would leave a note for the cabman pinned to the seat, and attach a five dollar bill to it. That ought to appease the man's righteous wrath.

With this thought in mind, he put his head into the cab, and, to his surprise, discovered that he had a passenger.

"Ha, old fellos!" he caught the man by the shoulder. "Come! come! Fall asleep?"

The man did not reply.

"Drunk," was the thought that passed through Trenholme's mind as he turned the figure sharply about so that the face would be under the street light.

"My God!" he cried. "It's Malvern." He saw for the first time a deep, red gash across his right temple. "He's wounded!"

Quickly Trenholme unfastened Malvern's shirt and applied his ear to his chest. Again and again. No sign of life. The body was a dead weight, inert, lifeless. Ted Malvern was dead!

In a cold fear, trembling like a wind-blown leaf, he flung himself on the seat in the cab, beside the still form of Malvern, and tried to think.

"Of course," he said to himself, "I couldn't have, have—won't be suspected of doing it. I was with the Judge all evening. Yet, of all the people in the world, Malvern! It's preposterous. Unbelievable! No one can say I did it. And yet—" with these doubts and fears surging through his mind he was incapable of action, of determining on a course, of anything, but to sit there and sit there until—

He looked out. The rain had ceased. A man and a woman passed, laughing. His house, set back from the walk, looked cold and gloomy and inhospitable. He tried to think—to reason—to plan—what he would say when it was discovered, as it must shortly be discovered, that he had driven the dead body of Ted Malvern through the streets—the murdered body of a man who, every one knew, had been on bad terms with him for years. The Trenholme temper again!

He may have been in this half stupor, half madness for an hour—how long he did not know—but at last he heard a car approach and stop.

"All right, Jim," a man's voice cried. "Here's the car. Thanks."

The other car passed on and the man who had alighted from it came over, leaped into the seat and started off.

Trenholme tapped on the window.

The driver turned.

"Oh, Mr. Trenholme," he said. "I thought you was to bed and asleep long ago. Where to?"

"The police station," Trenholme replied hoarsely.

"Any trouble?" the cabman inquired.

"Plenty," Trenholme managed to say, and then, he huddled up in the seat beside the dead man, speaking not another word.

THE evidence, of course, was circumstantial.

The state built its case up, brick by brick, on the foundation of animosity which Trenholme had already laid for such a damnable structure as now enclosed him.

Malvern had come to his death at the hand or hands of some person or persons who had used a blunt instrument, not found.

The only one in the world who had a motive for the crime was Trenholme, who had gone about, year after year, voicing hatred and distrust of the victim.

It was this same Trenholme who could not rationally account for his movements during the critical moments of the episode; this same Trenholme who had driven the dead body of his victim through the streets at night; this same Trenholme who, to establish a line of conduct compatible with

innocence, had conveyed the body of his victim to the police station.

The old, familiar Trenholme temper!

The case came to trial early in the Spring and it lasted almost a week.

The jury was out an hour and a quarter and returned a verdict of NOT GUILTY.

It was no more or less than the district attorney had expected. He gather his papers together and as he left the room to one of his disappointed assistants and said, "circumstantial evidence," with a shrug of his shoulders.

The law was finished with Henry Trenholme.

But, where the law leaves off, society begins.

Trenholme had, of course, resigned from the club. He gave up his membership in two other local organizations, besides absenting himself from any public gathering that was likely to include those he had once counted his friends.

His business in the city, luckily, did not suffer greatly, as New York is a big place and New Yorkers do not practice the form of ostracism that society delights in when one of its members violates a code.

And among his business friends, Trenholme counted none more worthy of friendship than Cal Rogers.

It was Rogers who had, first of all, come to his assistance when the clouds lowered over him. It was Rogers who had suggested Jacoby, the great criminal lawyer, whose defense of his client had been strikingly brilliant. It was Rogers who, on his first day back at the office, first entered to resume business relations so abruptly ended by the Claredale tragedy.

"I've had four months to think it over, Cal," Trenholme said to him wanly, "and the facts that I know are so plain and so simple and so easily put together that I'm stumped to give the wildest guess as to what actually happened to Malvern that night. It's like a dream to me. I don't think we'll ever know."

"Murder will out," Rogers replied. "Some day the truth will be known. In the meantime, Henry, why don't you come to the city to live. You're all alone. You can pack up and get out of Claredale tomorrow. Come to New York and mingle with new friends and new faces and forget it. Leave that suburban insect society to itself."

"No," Trenholme replied. "I won't run away. They only believe I'm guilty now. They'll know it if I run out on them. I'll stick."

"All right," Rogers agreed reluctantly. "As you will, I'm giving you the right dope."

The subject was dropped.

That summer Trenholme spent most of his evenings reading detective stories and narratives that detailed the commission of crimes and the discovery of criminals and criminal methods. Poe, Gaboriau, Allan Haggard, John R. Coryell, Lamri Frikell, Doyle, Lombroso and Lupin were his constant companions.

He collected all the evidence available with respect to trials for murder; he interviewed dozens of authorities and frequently took trips to the scenes of crimes that were recounted in/etail in the daily press. Secure in the knowledge of his own innocence he thought only of vindicating himself before the world, and to those friends in whom he confided, he announced that until he knew who killed Ted Malvern he would never desist in his efforts.

Thus the summer passed, and Fall came.

Claredale society, of course, passed him by.

The Country Club ball came and went.

IT was drawing along toward Christmas when, one Friday evening, he and Rogers were sitting before the log fire in his home, Rogers having come to Claredale to spend a week-end with him. Trenholme suddenly rose and began to pace the floor.

"It was on such a night as this," he cried, "when Malvern was killed. Listen to the rain," he went to the window and looked out. The water ran from the pane in sheets; the wind whistled around the house. "Just such a night as this."

"Henry," Rogers spoke excitedly. "It's a chance. But, something happened that night that you may have forgotten. I've heard it said that similar circumstances sometimes restore a man's memory—reconstruct a scene and so on. Let's get out your car and drive to the club."

"Nonsense," Trenholme said with hesitation. "Go out a night like this on a wild goose chase? Never!"

"Why not?" Rogers persisted. "We can get there and back, unseen, if that's what your afraid of. We needn't meet any of your former friends. They won't be out tonight, and anyway, the club is closed

early in the evening during the winter, isn't it, except for social affairs?"

"It's nonsense."

"Come on," Rogers grasped him by the arm. "It's worth a trial. Let's go. I'll help you get your car out. I've never seen the club and maybe I'll be able to find something you and everyone else missed. Come on. I want to do it."

Smiling at the insistence of his friend, Trenholme finally consented.

It was almost midnight when they literally skidded through the rain ridden streets, all deserted, and drew up in front of the club. A single light in an upper window, betrayed the presence of the caretaker.

Trenholme parked the car by the roadside.

They mounted the front steps to the wet, slippery porch.

"This is the door I came out of," Trenholme indicated the double door that led to the steps. "And here," they walked around porch, lighted but dimly by a flickering light that was always left burning at night, "is the door that leads from the stairway to the ball-room."

"I see," Rogers said simply, grasping the rail for support on the wind swept porch. "Now, Henry, go to that door out of which you came, that night, and walk down the steps and out to where you got into the taxi."

Trenholme, smiling at the futility of the enterprise, groped along the wall to the door leading from the billiard room, and thence down the steps to the walk. He paced thirty or forty feet to where the taxi stood that night and then, he slowly walked back again.

He mounted the steps and rounded the corner of the porch to where he had left Rogers.

But Rogers had disappeared!

Calling out his name, Trenholme, with a fast beating heart, realized, above the din of the storm, that Rogers did not answer.

Frantically, for it was a night of horror in remembrance, he breast the rising gale and circled the club, calling out Rogers' name.

Unable to credit his senses, he stumbled through the darkness, and, in a far corner of the porch, he stepped on a body. His hands, groping in the darkness, told him it was Rogers. He was too weak with terror to pick him up. He managed to stagger to the billiard room door and pounded on it frantically, bringing the caretaker with whose help he got the limp form into the club.

There was a nasty welt across the brow of the man, who was breathing, but unconscious.

A telephone call brought the doctor from Claredale in a hurry.

"It might be a fractured skull," the doctor said. "We must get him to the city without delay. Who is he?" the doctor asked.

"A friend of mine," Trenholme replied.

"Your friends seem to meet with strange adventures," the doctor said dryly, and that was all the words he spoke as they got Rogers into Trenholme's car.

At the hospital, Rogers was rushed to the operating room. Trenholme paced the corridor like a lion in a cage until word came to him that Rogers would live—but he could not be seen for hours.

The day passed like a nightmare to Trenholme.

He sat, crouched in his office chair, before the telephone. He answered every call listlessly and dully, until the hospital was announced.

"Come right over," the voice said.

TRENHOLME had to bend low to catch the words that fell from Rogers' lips.

"We found out," Rogers whispered, holding his friend's hand in his weak fingers. "I was struck by the limb of a tree. In the storm."

The tears raced down Trenholme's cheeks.

"He—he will live?" he asked the doctor who towered over him.

"Yes, surely," the physician replied. "He is out of danger."

The next day Trenholme appeared at the Claredale Country Club with a brand new axe he had purchased in the city—a bright, new shiny axe.

"I've come to cut down a tree," he explained to the caretaker and to the group of erstwhile friends he found there.

"No need," Judge Kimball, who was among them, said with a suggestion of moisture in his eyes, "the wind blew it down last night."

Trenholme threw back his head and laughed.

And the Trenholme temper was no more.

Out of the Dark

(Continued from page 3)

"It happens to all of us—sooner or later," commented Jack. Then he looked around curiously and added, "But I wouldn't want it to happen to me here."

Mrs. Sage looked about eighty. Her hair was combed back, leaving a puffy, iron-gray frizzle over each ear. Her nose was sharp and her chin retreating, giving her the aspect of an ancient rodent—a picture that was enhanced by the peering keenness of small black eyes.

"Here's as good as any place," she continued. "But I wouldn't want to be killed the way Tony Mario was."

"So he was killed? How?" Sailor Jack looked interested.

"Of course, you've been away and haven't seen the newspapers. So I'll tell you," said Mrs. Sage. The effort to tell that story showed that her nerves were strongly affected.

"It happened in the night. Nobody knows how. I heard the man groaning, and went downstairs for the landlord, Mr. Murphy. He broke in the room and we found the man senseless and in great pain. He died in a hospital, and all he could tell about what killed him didn't help. He died shouting, 'A monkey's hand stabbed me. It was Cambio! It was Cambio!'"

"Who's Cambio?" asked Jack.

"The Italian fruit man downstairs. He's being held, but they can't find the monkey that Cambio kept in his room. You see, Cambio had a sailor friend who gave him a monkey. He also had a beautiful daughter. Cambio wouldn't let any man keep company with her. The police think that she and Tony Mario had been close. The girl has acknowledged that he tried to be her lover."

Jack Danby looked hard at the old woman—"Tony said the monkey stabbed him, yet he accused Cambio. That's queer," he remarked.

"No, the police decided Tony was out of his senses about the monkey hand. They suspect Cambio and have him in jail. He seems to be a kind-hearted man and everybody likes him. His girl, Lisia, is all broke up about it. She keeps store while her father's locked up. I'm sorry for her."

Sailor Jack was attentive. He looked puzzled. "Well! It's too much for me. That monkey's hand business sort o' gives me the creeps. And in this room, too! I'll sleep with an eye open," he grinned.

Mrs. Sage went to her room and Jack busied himself taking things from his chest, placing them in the dusty clothes closet. Suddenly, he stooped to examine the floor at the darkest end of the closet.

THE cooling night-wind fanned the flimsy curtains of the two south windows as Sailor Jack opened the door and entered the room. The street lamps cast enough light for him to see dimly the various objects; the bed, the wash-stand, the straw-bottom chair and his chest in the corner. There was no electricity in this dilapidated old rooming house. He found a match and lit the gas.

For five nights he had slept in the room and much of the time had figuratively kept an eye open. He was a light sleeper, and a former dangerous adventure had taught him a trick—sheets of paper spread on the floor. The crawl of a snake on that paper was sufficient to awaken him, he thought.

Jack had lost no time about making the acquaintance of the dark-eyed daughter of Cambio at the fruit store. He was fascinated with her beauty. Sailors are rapid workers, because their stay ashore is short. Jack had found out to his own satisfaction that the story of Tony Mario's intimacy with Lisia was a myth. She had liked Tony; that was all.

Tonight he was tired, for he had been up late with the girl. He was soon asleep, his slumber haunted by dreams of Cambio. The Italian, as seen in the dream, stood before Sailor Jack and took hold of the young man's muscular arm. Cambio was a tall man, with black hair. He led Jack to an automobile standing in a muddy road. It was night, drizzling and chilly. The scene was out in the open country and, with Cambio driving, the motor-car was soon skidding up a long, slippery hillside. On top of the hill was a two-story house, which loomed darkly among trees in silhouette against the sky.

There was no sign of life about the place. Heavy vines trailed in wet drapery over the rim of the porch roof, as Jack and the Italian walked up the four creaking wooden steps.

The door opened silently and Mrs. Sage appeared.

Without a word, she motioned for the two travelers to enter. "How strange!" said Jack.

Mrs. Sage took a large key from the pocket of her apron and handed it to Cambio. "Here is the key to the mystery," she said. Cambio rolled back the corner of the rug, unlocked a trap-door, raising it and disclosing stairs that led downward as into a dark cellar. Cambio and Jack, without a word, descended.

Silently they passed into a wide corridor. Three candles were burning on the wall and a heavy black curtain hung across the far end. At their approach, the portiere drew open and the two entered a wide, square room, which had a low ceiling. An odor of bananas pervaded the place, and the walls and floor were white marble. Here, also, three candles burned in a bracket on each of three of the walls. On the fourth wall, at the far end of the room, was a platform, across which extended another heavy black curtain, ornamented with a silvery border. It screened from view a stage, as in a theatre. Again the sailor said, "How strange this is!"

The sense of a weird presence seemed to seize him. Numbness was creeping over his body. He stood immovable as a statue.

Without turning around, he seemed to know that Cambio had vanished, leaving him alone in this room in this strange presence. The curtain of the stage slowly drew open and disclosed a white floor, which melted away into black shadows. Jack seemed to have turned to stone. His arms hung at his sides like weights. He shivered with the chill of the uncanny atmosphere. "Surely, this is death. I am dying," he said.

The intense impression that he was in the presence of some awful thing bore down upon Jack as he stood transfixed, watching the stage. Across the platform, from the right, slowly glided the figure of a military person, clad in a suit of white satin, ornamented with silver braid. Stern and forbidding, the figure silently strode to the center of the stage and, stiffly turning, faced him. Without a word or sign, it passed on toward the left side and vanished in inky shadows. But that look from the black sockets of lightless eyes! It froze the blood in Jack's arteries. The curtains slowly closed and the warm blood rushed back into his body.

"What a dream!" he said in his dream. Then he felt something like the little hand of a monkey gently touching his arm. He awoke with a frightened start!

The dream left him at first too numb to move—all that saved him! Had he moved, it is likely that he would have joined the other victim of that room in an unconscious trip to a hospital—to his death.

A double dagger, loaded with poison poised to strike death into his body!

THERE are moments during a climax in real life when one feels utterly paralyzed, utterly without a thought of what best to do. The self-protection urge, hidden in the subconscious mind, is then acting according to racial instinct, commonly displayed in nature in those animals which simulate death to deceive an enemy. Unconsciously, Jack was actually "playing possum."

He remained rigid. On his left forearm, dimly silhouetted against the feeble light of the window, was the object whose touch was like that of a cold, clammy hand. The sensation was, at the same time, soft and velvety, mingled with the tickling touch of bristly hairs in contact with his bare skin. It made his flesh crawl!

Surmounting the dark pyramidal form where the knuckles of the "hand" should be, he saw a minute gleam of light, like that of a small diamond, shining in darkness. A queer hand to wear a jewel! Aghast at the thought, his reasoning faculties began to work. He began to surmise that the very improbable theory which he had formed concerning the death of the other occupant of that room was after all true. That here was the deadly object which in but one in a hundred thousand chances he might expect to encounter.

The Thing moved, and his flesh burned beneath its touch. Now he, also, was free to move. But he dared not. Quitting his arm, it moved like a hand playing five-finger exercises along the edge of the bed. In a moment it dropped from sight over the side.

Jack realized that the newspaper which he had spread upon the floor to give warning of the approach of an intruder toward the bed had failed to warn him. He had not awakened until it had touched his arm.

But now he could hear the thing as it moved across the sheets of paper. The sounds were like light human footsteps tip-toeing away from the direction of the bed. Where was it going?

Was it moving toward the clothes-closet, whose

door was partly open, or was it approaching the corner where the wash-stand was partly hidden in shadow? Or was it coming around to the other side of the bed? Jack's senses were confused.

A prompt decision was necessary. There was no time to light the gas. He snatched a flash-lamp from beneath his pillow and pointed it in the direction of the sounds. Instantly, a blurred, dark streak darted across the beam of light on the floor. The Thing was headed toward the corner occupied by the wash-stand.

"Damned if you will!" muttered the sailor, quickly hurling the coat, which he had snatched from the back of a chair where he had carefully placed it when retiring. In the uncertain light he could see that the intruder had been intercepted in an attempt to reach safety by concealment in the shadows under the wash-stand. His coat blocked the way. Jack was aghast at what he saw, for the deadly creature was indeed the largest specimen of its kind that he had ever seen.

The Thing seemed to know that it was cornered. It seemed to be a fiend possessed with powers of diabolical reasoning. In an instant it advanced boldly in quick, short steps until it stood again upon the sheets of newspaper. Its little cluster of diamond eyes gleamed wickedly, like beads of fire in a cushion of dark brown plush. It seemed to be thinking—plotting how to outwit the sailor.

Jack had another quick thought. He took a step toward the closet door, intending to close it. That would cut off all possible escape of the intruder. The hairy fiend seemed to sense his intention. It reared back and drew up like a fist ready to strike.

There was a soft, quick bound, and the ball of darkness made a streak of shadow again across the paper. At Jack's bare knee it sprang, and he knew that if it touched him, those poisoned daggers would enter his flesh. Heroic efforts would then be required to save him from the fate of Tony Mario.

Jack had grabbed up one of his heavy shoes and now held it as a weapon of defense. With the precision of a skillful batter, he met the enemy's advance, and the force of his blow stunned the creature. A further series of crushing blows soon put the Thing out of existence.

Mrs. Sage in the next room evidently suspected that another murder was being committed. Jack could hear her nervously pacing the floor. Finally, she knocked at his door.

"Everything's all right," he assured her, and she went back to bed.

* * *

IN the morning Jack went into the fruit store. Lisia welcomed him.

"Do you dance?" he asked. The girl looked surprised. "I mean, did you ever dance any of those native dances over in your country?" She explained that she had seen the villagers in her mountains in Italy dance the tarantella. Then she explained how this dance originated, according to folk legend, to keep in rapid movement the victim of the deadly tarantula's bite.

"Well, if Tony Mario had danced, he'd be alive today," said Jack, mysteriously. He opened a newspaper package and displayed the remains of a huge tarantula. Lisia drew back in horror. Then her eyes brightened.

"You have saved my father!" she exclaimed. "Now I know. This thing was brought here a year ago in a load of bananas. It escaped, and has been living in the walls of the house. It must have bit Tony while he was asleep, and he did not know."

"Yes—we'll clear Cambio, and his monkey. You see, I came here just to find how it happened. I suspected how, but I wanted to make sure. This thing did look like a monkey's hand, when I saw it on my arm last night."

Then he showed Lisia his card, which proved Sailor Jack to be one of the most distinguished detectives from headquarters.

"GARBED IN GREEN"

Begins

Next Week

TRICKED By Geo. B. Jenkins

(Continued from page 8)

points of hate in Benton's were deadlier. Despair seized Andrew with icy hands. He shivered.

"What are you doing in my rooms?" Benton asked, his voice silkily cool.

"Shut up!" Cora snapped viciously, and then turned to Andrews. "You heard what he said about you and that blonde. Now you tell me the truth!"

Andrews submitted while Benton searched him for weapons. Then he spoke. "He's lying to you, and you know it. Don't you see that Benton's been deliberately trying to make you jealous? Why, how can you—"

"If you listen to him," Benton interrupted, "he'll convince you that he's never even seen the blonde. Why argue with him? I'm not going to." His fingers tightened upon the automatic. "He's a burglar; he's forced his way into my rooms, and I'm going to shoot him when he tries to escape. Now—"

Death leered from Benton's eyes. Andrews was powerless, completely at the man's mercy. Even if she desired to do so, Cora could not secure the automatic she had taken from Andrews in time to save him. She turned her attention to Benton.

"Just a moment," she said. "Do you want the police in here? I don't care to see them."

Benton paused thoughtfully. "I won't kill him now," he remarked coolly. "There was an expression on the girl's face that he did not like. Not yet had she been completely won over. At the moment, she probably hated Andrews, but this hate might not last. Benton knew something about women; he had seen women, who had betrayed the men they loved to the police, afterward exert every effort to save these same men from consequences of the betrayal.

"You were right, Benton," Andrews remarked grimly, noticing that the man's hand, containing the threatening gun, did not shake or waver. "A man can't trust a woman."

"Neither can a woman trust a man!" Cora declared. "I thought I could believe you when you said—"

"Are you through with him?" asked Benton crisply. "What about it? Shall I bump him off?"

"No—but I don't want him to go running after

any blondes," said Cora. "I'm through with him, because he cheated, and nobody else will have him."

BENTON grinned evilly, cruelly. "We'll fix him so nobody will have him," he said. Then, to Andrews: "Get in that chair!"

Taking the cord of a bath robe, Benton bound Andrews' wrists and ankles. Cora brought a short length of rope from the serving pantry, and assisted in the tying.

"What are you going to do to him?" she asked. "Not that I care much, now that I know what sort of a man he is." Her eyes, when she looked at Andrews, were filled with scorn.

"He's got to be fixed so he won't ever bother either one of us," said Benton. "Put your arms out straight, Andrews, on top of the table. You don't want to? There!" He fastened Andrews' arms, from the elbows down, tightly to the top of the table, with the palms down, and his hands open.

"I don't want to think that I'm likely to get shot every time I go out on the street," Benton went on. "I want to feel safe."

Andrews submitted to the tying. If he objected too strenuously, Benton would certainly shoot him down. In her present mood, Cora would back the other, and if Andrews was killed she would be compelled to agree to Benton's story, else be suspected of the crime herself.

Apparently, Cora had deserted him completely. Her fury had grown greater; she seemed utterly pitiless, and no trace of mercy could be detected in her voice or manner.

"You double-crossed me," she said, "and I'm treating you the same way. You'll play around with a blonde?" she gloated. "Well, she'll be welcome to you after we are finished with you."

Andrews could only sit, helpless and powerless, and wait for he knew not what. He had been gagged, tied to a chair, with his forearms bound tightly to the table. He could not speak, and he could scarcely move.

A horrible light appeared in Benton's eyes. "Get the hatchet, Cora," he ordered.

"The hatchet?"

"Yes. We'll fix this umba so we can sleep at

night. No more gifting for you, Andrews." He turned to Cora. "Get the hatchet; you'll find it hanging between two nails in the serving pantry."

IV

ANDREWS chewed savagely upon the uncomfortable gag between his teeth, seeking to make it less annoying. He could neither struggle nor defend himself in any way. Benton had been right—women get a man into trouble. If they become jealous, they turn upon a man.

Looking up, Andrews started in horror. The ferocious face of Benton as he took the hatchet from Cora would have made any man shudder. Benton was jubilant as he whispered into Andrews' ear.

"Four fingers from each hand," he said softly. "I'll let you keep your thumbs."

That was all he said. Laying the hatchet upon the table so that Andrews could see its sharp, shining edge, Benton improvised tourniquets from two short bits of rope, binding Andrews' arms above the elbows. In that way, Andrews probably would be prevented from bleeding to death.

Mutilated! Andrews went sick and faint. He could not break the bonds that bound him. He imagined his hands as they would look—four stumps of fingers, useless, an eternal reminder of the futility of trusting a woman. There would be a thumb grotesquely askew on each hand, but—A bloody sweat grew upon Andrews' forehead. Implacable, vengeful, perversely enjoying Andrews' agony, Benton stood with the hatchet upraised.

Cora stood near by, watching in silence. All the despair, the terror, the horror, the crushing paralyzing fear that was in Andrews' mind went into the desperate, pleading look he sent to her.

She saw the look, and bent over him. "You tricked me," she said, hate seething in her voice. "I wouldn't take a long breath—"

Benton slipped one arm about the girl's shoulders. "We'll get along very nicely, won't we, dear?" he asked caressingly. "You'd rather go abroad with me than to let him take the blonde to Europe, wouldn't you?"

Cora smiled up at him. "You have—enough to take us to—"

(Concluded on page 31)

GOOD PAPER By Marcel Wallenstein—(Continued from page 22)

Goddard came close to her side. He was frowning. "Why," he demanded in an aggrieved voice, "would anyone send a letter through the mail to a person and an address he knows do not exist?"

Having asked his question he stood glaring at Mrs. Goddard as though she might in some way be responsible for his dilemma. That lady dropped her book and patted back a yawn with slender graceful fingers.

"To make work for the dead letter office, I suppose," she answered amiably. "Is that the answer?"

Her reply had been the fruit of the first idle thought which came into her head. A jest, nothing more. She was not prepared for its effect on her husband. His little eyes snapped under their hedgy brows.

"The dead letter office," he repeated slowly, and then as the idea took hold of him:

"The dead letter office! That may be it! The dead letter office!"

IN a room on the upper floor of the post office a detail of men was employed with the city's dead mail. It was here, Goddard had learned, and not to the Washington office, that unclaimed letters and parcels mailed in this city came after futile journeys. It was in this room the government made its final attempt to locate persons entitled to the carelessly addressed or otherwise misdirected matter known as dead mail. When Tony Marona of East Houston Street indited a message to his brother John, the worthy but not prominent manicure of Newark pavements, he was sometimes wont to inscribe on the envelope only the name of his brother, forgetting to add the address. So Tony's letter and several thousand of a similar nature, after restless wanderings, frequently brought up at the local branch of the dead-letter office. For the postal regulations have it that such an unclaimed letter shall be returned to the city from which it is mailed.

Add to these thousands of carelessly or illegibly addressed parcels and envelopes from persons who should and do know better and it is not difficult to understand why so much floor space and labor is given over to dead mail, and, also, why the Postmaster General at Washington has designated one week in each year to the education of the public in the matter of the proper addressing of its mail.

At one long table a man assorted, examined and opened parcel post matter. Today a toy horse and a consignment of once fresh eggs were among the things that came to his hand. This man could, if he desired, tell an amusing story of human foibles gleaned from his daily experience, but it is not with him our narrative is concerned.

At the other end of the big room at a similar long table sat a pallid man. Before him lay rubber stamps and a metal opener. Now and then a boy entered from an outer office with another sack of first class mail which he dumped on the table near the man's left hand.

This man worked with the speed and precision of one long accustomed to his job. In appearance he was such a man as one sees at any one of a thousand city desks: stooped and pallid of face. A student of character, however, would have singled him out because of his unusual hands, with the thin tapering fingers of a virtuoso.

Rapidly he examined the letters before him, slit them open, noted the contents and marked each with barely an instant's hesitation.

A boy entered and dumped the contents of a striped canvas sack at the man's left. In the pile of envelopes that cascaded out of the bag was one whose markings distinguished it. On any desk it would have commanded immediate attention. It was a fat envelope with two diagonal scarlet bands across its face.

It lay on the top of the pile and it seems natural that the pallid clerk should have given it his immediate attention, which he did with no ap-

pearance of hurry or agitation. He held it a little below the table top and close to his body as he cut it open. Then he seemed to fumble and stooped to the floor to recover the letter opener which he had dropped. As he resumed his upright position in his chair his hands were empty. The red striped envelope was nowhere in sight.

There were quick steps behind him and the elderly man felt the hand of authority on his shoulder. He turned swiftly and looked into the face of a post office inspector. Another stood by with handcuffs.

"AND he'll probably go free," said Goddard as he sat later with Brunen in the latter's establishment and recounted the final details of the forgery to his friend. "He had the money on him and the envelope, but they say it isn't conclusive evidence."

"I can't see why," demurred the other. "It's theft from the mails for one thing."

"But quite another thing to prove ownership of the money. There is no one who can prove his right to it. And this Mabry, as he calls himself, was only performing his routine duty when he opened the envelope. He'd been at the job two years; worked his way into it after entering the postal service through the usual civil service examinations. His scheme was to cover every trail through his system of blind clues. Undoubtedly he had spent years perfecting the idea and this was his first slip. There isn't a scrap of evidence against him in any former affair. No criminal record of any kind. He's unknown to the police."

Brunen lighted his pipe and smoked for a moment, regarding the banker with an admiring gaze.

"And he would have succeeded if it had not been for you, Ely," he said.

"Yes, I suppose so," responded Goddard. He had completely forgotten his wife's lucky answer.

THE END

The Menace

(Continued from page 6)

"Haultain," quietly answered Sir Oliver.
"Mr. Smith's old chief from India!" exclaimed the girl. "Dieu merci!"

"And you are the Princess?" asked Sir Oliver.
"My name, it is Dauphine," answered the girl.
"I work for Mr. Smith. Sometimes I play ze role of Princess so Mr. Smith can catch ze thief. Sometimes they call me 'Princess' but it is one joke."

"And the boy?" asked Sir Oliver.
"Me monnicker's Jimmy Dugan," burst out the boy, "an' Mr. Smith's me best friend. He saved me dog, Lemon, from gettin' croaked by a gas-buggy. I'm startin' school now but I does con-fident-u-al work after de brain factory's closed for de day."
"Well, where is Smith?" broke in Cormorand.
"That's what we want to know."

"Patience!" returned Sir Oliver. "You see a strange household and one quite in keeping with the character of Smith. Here is a native servant whom I have known for years while he served his master in India. He would give his life a hundred times for Smith's sake. We see, also, a young savage from the city's streets who would worm his way into places where no man could go—at Smith's command. He takes the place of the *chokras* or young native boys whom Smith used to employ in India. Lastly there is the Princess, perhaps the finest actress who is not on the stage. I pity the man—or even the woman—whom she is pitted against. For some reason or other she, too, is devoted to Aurelius Smith."

A slow color mounted to the girl's face which brought a particularly stupid stare from Sir Oliver.
"Where's Lemon?" he asked very suddenly.

"De Mutt's hittin' de hay in de basement," answered Jimmy while he sank to the floor and, with his head on his arm, went peacefully to sleep.

"And Smith?" asked Van Duysen. "Do they know nothing of Smith?"

"Patience!" repeated Sir Oliver. "There is yet an hour to midnight and I—ah—rather fancy that Smith will keep the engagement which he made to meet me on the day he promised."

"I can see no reason for not questioning them," said Cormorand rather irritably.

"Very well," acquiesced Sir Oliver as Langa Doonh entered with a tray of coffee cups. Seating himself comfortably in a chair he gazed blankly at a window-blind which was flapping in a summer breeze. After the first sip of coffee he addressed the Princess.
"Will you tell?"

"Yes," she replied, "if you give ze command."
"Then speak—for you are among friends."

"IN the first place," began the girl, looking earnestly at Sir Oliver, "this time I do not know ze object for which Mr. Smith work. This time it is a secret from us—perhaps because it is vair-rie dangerous. I live in my room down stairs but, last night, Mr. Smith go out at nine o'clock and tell us all to wait here for him. We wait and wait and wait. At three this morning he rush in all out of breath and sit down and laugh and laugh and laugh. Then there is big pounding on ze door."

"Mr. Smith jump up and give ze goldfish some crumb and laugh some more. He tell us not to touch anything till he come back, no matter what happen and not to do anything at all. Then ze lock on door break and four men rush in. There is pistol shot and Mr. Smith go through ze window—crash!"

The Princess threw up the flapping blind and revealed the window with the lower pane completely shattered.

"Did he go up or down the fire-escape?" asked Sir Oliver.

"Down and through my window just below. I find ze ugly blood mark on ze sill."

"What happened next?"

"Ze big men come in and break everything and look for something and find nothing."

"And then?"

"Ze men ask question but Jimmy play stupid, I talk only French and Langa Doonh make noise in ze throat. Ze men swear and go away. Then we wait and wait till morning and wait all day. We wait now and—I—wait—always—"

The girl's head sank upon her arms on the table and she slept.

"What do you think about it, Langa Doonh?" asked Sir Oliver.

"Sahib," gravely replied the servant and there was no sleep whatever in his black eyes, "master come back when master ready. Sahib like more coffee?"

"You see, gentlemen," said Sir Oliver, "the case is very simple. Smith took the poison-flask away from the murderous individual who threatened to use it. He was pursued and had to run for it. He hid the flask in this room, escaping by the window. He will return when the monster who threatens humanity comes for his lost flask."

"But this room was searched and nothing was found," objected Cormorand.

"I know where it is," was the cool reply as the old man stared with absurd fascination into a fresh cup of coffee just offered by the watchful Langa Doonh.

"Where?" ejaculated Van Duysen while Jennings, the private guard, looked up with interest.

Before an answer could be given the buzzer sounded its harsh warning and, strangely enough, Jimmy awoke with a start and scampered to the door before Langa Doonh could set down the coffee things.

"Good-night, shirt! If it ain't de boss at last!" shouted Jimmy on his way to the door.

He was back almost at once with a drooping face. "Dere's a guy out dere on wheels," he said and handed a note to Langa Doonh who passed it gravely to Sir Oliver.

"Note from Smith," said Sir Oliver, reading as he sipped his coffee. "He wishes the bearer, a cripple, to wait for him in his apartment."

There followed the trundling of small wheels and into the apartment came the cripple who had nearly tripped Sir Oliver on the sidewalk. He was seated in his low, box-like contrivance and propelled himself by means of his hands upon the floor. From under a ragged overcoat, upon his lap, projected the two stumps of his legs. His lean face was unshaven and dark goggles covered his eyes while matted, gray hair hung down to a dirty collar. His hat, with some pencils and a few small coins, still lay in his lap.

"What do you want, my man?" asked Sir Oliver as the cripple backed his rickety conveyance against the wall so that he might have a support to lean upon.

THERE was no answer and Van Duysen stooped and turned a dirty card which hung from the man's neck. Upon the card was crudely printed "Deaf and Dumb." Slowly the pitiful head sank forward and the man appeared to sleep.

"This may be an unexpected complication in the case," remarked Sir Oliver, pulling at his moustache and staring fixidly at the cripple. "I wonder if it has any significance for us. Smith was always doing charitable things."

Jennings scrutinized the sleeping beggar and shrugged his shoulders in disgust before seating himself in a corner.

"It is getting late," observed Cormorand. "If you really do know where this poison-flask is hidden, please produce it at once."

"There is only one place in this room which has not been searched," remarked Sir Oliver, rising and approaching the aquarium.

Baring an arm he plunged his hand into the water and, from the gravel at the bottom of the aquarium, produced a flat and peculiarly designed vessel of glass. The entire neck and mouth were covered heavily with gray wax and, as Sir Oliver held it up, it was seen to contain a yellowish liquid.

Amid the gasp of surprise, which ran around, Jennings rose suddenly, overturning his chair. The girl, raising her head from her arms, stared in sleepy astonishment from Sir Oliver with the flask to the beggar asleep against the wall. Langa Doonh quietly refilled Sir Oliver's coffee cup. For a brief interval Jimmy was the only one to speak.

"For the love of Mike!" he exclaimed and relapsed into the general silence.

The old, white-haired man was a picturesque figure as he stood with the flask in his hand and studied the seal intently through his monocle.

"I think I will take the flask for safe-keeping while it is in this country," proposed Cormorand, extending a hand.

"Patience!" returned Sir Oliver, ignoring the hand. "We have reached the culmination of Smith's work. There are some things to be explained. The man who sold this flask to a certain American, unworthy of the name, confessed to having made the sale. To a large extent I shall deduce the facts of the case in the light of my past knowledge of Smith's methods."

"Better do it in comfort after we take the flask back to my home," interrupted Cormorand.

"We might as well come to the point at once, Cormorand"—Sir Oliver's voice grew hard—"since you are the man who bought the flask for your own selfish ends. You bought it to force a corrupt election and to put your own henchmen into politi-

cal power. Unfortunately for you, Mr. Van Duysen engaged the services of Aurelius Smith."

"You lie!" asserted Cormorand, his eyes glittering with anger.

"Very well, we shall see," continued Sir Oliver, still holding the flask. "Let Mr. Van Duysen judge. He is a true American—a man of whom any country would be proud. I want the facts of this case to be known to him so that he may give the truth to the real men of America. I shall proceed."

"Smith entered your house last night, Cormorand, as a pretended guest. He used the old trick of shouting 'Fire!' and you rushed straight to the place where you had concealed the flask in your private study. The rest was easy although Smith had to be quick since he had only five minutes before the door was broken down. During that five minutes he softened a portion of the wax on this flask with a match and pressed down your fingerprints while you were half stunned. I can see him now."

"Hand that flask to me at once!" ordered Cormorand in a furious voice as he jerked a gun from his side pocket.

Jennings also drew a gun and stepped forward. "If I refuse?" asked Sir Oliver, reaching for his coffee cup with his free hand.

"Hand me that flask and sign a statement that you lie or I will put a bullet through your head," said Cormorand, his voice vibrating with anger.

"If you fire," returned Sir Oliver, "the flask will fall and break and we will all die together."

For a second Cormorand hesitated and then, in a fit of passion, pointed his pistol straight at the old man's head.

"Have it so!" he shouted. "To—with us all!"

VAN DUYSSEN and Langa Doonh both sprang toward the man with the pistol. Before either could reach him, however, a shot rang out from behind and Cormorand crumpled to the floor—killed by Jennings, his own guard, who had become terrified at the possible smashing of the sealed flask.

Amid the hush which followed, Sir Oliver placed the flask on a table and nodded his approval as Langa Doonh, with the silent spring of a panther, disarmed Jennings and pinioned his arms behind him.

Slowly the old fighter of criminals, dropping his monocle, approached the beggar on the floor.

"Is the job well done?" he asked.

The hunched figure raised itself from and out of the box until it was tall and straight, while two dummy stumps of legs fell to the floor. As the matted wig came away a wild shout of joy escaped Jimmy and something very like a sob issued from the throat of the girl who had sat through death and terrible menace in silence and without moving.

Only Langa Doonh seemed utterly unmoved. Having tied Jennings most securely he approached the transformed beggar.

"Sahib like coffee?" he asked.

"Mr. Van Duysen," said Sir Oliver, "let me introduce Aurelius Smith, the man who planned all this and who was kind enough to assign me a small part in the drama."

"A rather dangerous part," returned Van Duysen, shaking hands with Smith who could scarcely stand after his cramped position. "You were very nearly shot."

"Not at all," replied Sir Oliver. "Didn't you have him covered, Smith?"

"Oh-huh," said Smith, "but I saw that Jennings was going to do the job for me."

"But the poison-flask might have been broken in any one of a hundred different ways," protested Van Duysen as he dazedly watched Smith drop the pulseless wrist of the man on the floor.

"Poison?" asked Sir Oliver, staring stupidly at the flask. "I forgot about that. Getting old. Thoughts wandering. People seem to forget that a poison which works through the ether could not be contained by glass. Ether permeates glass like everything else. There never was any such poison. There were plenty of rumors of it during the war—but nothing more. I sent this flask to New York so that Smith could plant it on the man he wanted: It contains something more interesting than poison—in America."

"What's that?" asked Van Duysen.

"Scotch whiskey," returned Sir Oliver.

"GARBED IN GREEN"

Next Week

Crooked Lane

(Continued from page 20)

with the pin-point pupils of an habitual drug-user had dropped the faintest of hints: "You try Doyers, pal," he said, in a husky, asthmatic guttural. "A block south, see? Looie's place—there's a guy there—ask for 'Chu-chu'—he'll give you—what you want—"

"Chu-chu" might or might not be the brain behind that daring trick that had looted Dorfman's of over five hundred thousand dollars' worth of gems and DA's and DB's—but, as it happened, that short block of Doyers—it was, as Power knew, the one place where he might expect to find the owner of that silken cord.

Following directions he found the door of a house with faded letters sprawled in luminous relief.

LUIGI DE SANTACRODE
SALUMERIA

This was "Looie's." The patrolman, nerves at pitch, waited a moment before that dark portal, but faintly visible under the light, stained and battered, scored deep with long, parallel incisions like half-healed wounds. And under the light, too, it seemed to him that he could see dark stains upon the ancient wood; head-high, it was pitted deep with scars that had been puttied over; they had been bullet holes, he decided, as he stepped backward a pace at the muffled throbbing of a motor rising somewhere out of the dark.

The throbbing grew to a steady, roaring beat, echoing between the walls; there came a swift, purring rush, and a touring-car passed him, going west.

In the brief glimpse he had of it it seemed filled with men, the head-lights dark, and then, as it turned the corner under the light, he could have sworn that it was painted blue.

But there was more than one blue car in the city—he was getting fanciful—and then, as he turned again to face that door, it swung inward silently, and, framed in the opening, glimmering, head-high, like a head without a body, there rose a face, wedge-shaped, hairless, upturned to his so that he saw it as a face seen at the bottom of a well.

The face smirked, grinning, and it was more dreadful than before. The voice came, with a soft, sibilance:

"Mister—you come—have look-see—you wanchee my?"

The patrolman hesitated for an infinitesimal split second, his hand upon the flat, black shape of the automatic at his belt.

"Chu-Chu—?" he asked, low.

There came a rapid patter of swift Cantonese—a rustle from the shadows at the rear; a squeak and scurry as of rats in the dimness. Then:

"Yess—Yess!" there came the answer, hurried, eager, it seemed to Power. "Yess—yess—Mister—you come—have look-see—"

The patrolman entered; the door swung shut behind him with a muffled clang; there came the snick of steel. In the sudden, dead, arresting silence, his hand, reaching behind him, found the knob. He twisted it, tugging inward with all his strength. But he might as well have tried to move a mountain.

The door was fast.

Concluded Next Week

Tricked

(Continued from page 29)

"Yes; of course."

"Then we'll leave Ted to the blonde. Do you think she'll want him after—after—"

"Probably not, but what do we care?"

For a second, Benton looked deep into the girl's eyes. What he saw there evidently pleased him. He lifted the hatchet, and barely touched it upon the fingers of Andrews' right hand, close to the knuckles.

Cora reached out her hand. Hope whispered in Andrews' heart. Perhaps she had changed her mind; perhaps she was regretting that she had betrayed him to his enemy.

"After this happens," she said, "we don't want to loaf around here. It won't be safe. Are you—What are your plans?"

Benton paused. "After I fix him, we'll leave the country. I know a bootlegger, and he'll put us on a boat outside of the three-mile limit."

"Give me the hatchet," she suggested, "and let me do the chopping. I'll wait until you are ready to go."

V

WHILE Benton was moving around in the bedroom, Andrews thrilled with hope. He could not speak, but his eyes pleaded with Cora. His arms were numb, due to the tourniquets fastened above his elbows, and he could not raise or move them. But she must have known that his arms were figuratively stretched toward her, pleading for mercy.

Cora merely stared balefully at the man she had, earlier in the day, promised to help.

Slowly hope flickered in Andrews' eyes and died. He looked in vain for some sign of weakening, some indication that Cora was only playing a part, some indication that she had not transferred her allegiance to Benton. The eyes of the girl in the scarlet gown were pools of hate.

Andrews turned his eyes from the unforgiving face of the woman, and looked beyond her, over her shoulder. He could see through the door of the bedroom. He saw Benton put a bundle of banknotes into a small bag. Then, the bag was snapped shut, and Benton started toward the living room. Ont he way he paused, and his hand went toward the wall. When it came away, it held a swinging string of pearls.

Andrews made a desperate effort to speak. He strained at his bonds, he forced the air through his mouth, he brought his teeth together in frantic fear, trying to rid himself of the gag. If he could only tell Cora that Benton had the pearls! Probably they had been concealed behind a picture on the wall—a simple hiding place where no one would think of looking.

If Cora could be convinced that Benton had lied about the pearls, wouldn't she be doubtful of the existence of the blonde that the man had mentioned? Andrews writhed and swirled; he attempted to shout through the gag, but the only result was a muffled gurgle. He made desperate noises, signifying a desire to speak. Cora ignored him.

Benton had entered the living room. He stood beside the table, a smile upon his face. Andrews could see a bulge in the man's coat pocket, the bulge made by the string of pearls. Noticing that Andrews' gaze was fixed upon the pocket, Benton patted it caressingly, but meaningly.

"Ready to go," said Benton.

Cora rose to her feet. "His right hand first," she said, holding the hatchet aloft. It flashed back and, in midair, the cutting edge was reversed and the short, blunt head turned forward. Then, with all her strength, Cora swung. The head of the hatchet struck Benton in the temple.

VI

BENTON staggered. The gloating smile on his face wobbled, and a blank, dazed expression came upon his features. He swayed; then slumped down, sprawling upon the floor.

The sudden, exquisite sensation of relief that flooded Andrews blurred his eyes, and made the room swim before him. At length, a measure of composure returned to him, and he saw that Benton had been tied, hand and foot, competently and securely.

More than a minute had passed, for Cora was still telephoning. To Andrews, it seemed that she had been speaking for some time; he had a vague recollection of hearing her voice, even after the thread of fear had snapped, and peace had filled him.

She put the telephone receiver on the hook, and came across the living room floor to him. He made wordless noises in his throat, thanking her for releasing him even before she touched the ropes. First, she removed the gag, then the tourniquets upon his arms above the elbows. She did not free him entirely, however.

"I tried—tried to tell you," he said. "The pearls! The pearls are in his coat pocket! Get them, and cut me loose!"

"Not yet," she said coolly. "There's no hurry."

"No hurry?" he repeated. "This is confounded uncomfortable. I can't move! I don't want to stay here, trussed-up like this, forever. Use the hatchet! Cut these ropes and let—"

"Tricked!" Benton was speaking. Lying upon the floor, a thin trickle of crimson coming from his temple, he uttered the word in a rage-filled voice.

"What are you waiting for, Cora?" Andrews felt panic creeping upon him again. "Why don't you cut—"

There was a knock upon the door, and she rose to answer it. Three policemen entered the room, and grinned when they saw Andrews and Benton both tied and helpless.

"Good work, Miss Wilson," said one of the officers.

"We've been trying to get these two men for a long time. They're very clever criminals. Inspector Grant would like to have you report at headquarters today," the policeman went on. "He wants to put you on another case at once."

Cora a detective! This stupifying fact stunned Andrews. He was still dazed as he was released, and helped to his feet by the police. Now, the fact that he and Benton had been interrupted at the Van Werts' took on new significance. Cora had doubtless told them of the proposed raid!

He looked at Benton, who had also been arrested and untied. For an instant the two men glared at each other, then they both nodded gravely.

"What did I tell you about trusting a woman?" asked Benton.

"You were right," Andrews replied, sadly.

THE END

Midnight Dollars

(Continued from page 26)

"I was just thinking," O'Keefe replied vaguely. "Old man Page is in Europe, isn't he?"

Trant nodded.

"He's due home now any time, I believe."

The plain clothes man nodded, stood, stretched and consulted his watch again.

"Harrigan ought to be along shortly. We'd better get downstairs and he watching out for him. Wait'll I put this light out."

While they took up a station in the vestibule, Trant pondered what the detective had said about Barry Grantley. Somehow, he got the impression that O'Keefe was connecting the fifty thousand dollars in the satchel not only with the young man himself but the banking establishment of Grantley, Page and Company. Trant recalled Page. The banker, a strict disciplinarian, was a pillar of the church and one who frowned upon any conduct that was not strictly in keeping with his own straight-laced ideas and notions. Trant asked himself why he should even for an instant doubt Barry Grantley. It was true, the young man had the reputation of a rounder, but he had ample means of his own to play the role of spendthrift, it he so desired. Yet, one fact loomed up that could not be disregarded. Grantley was playing a part of his own; was playing some game of duplicity that had necessitated the telling of a number of untruths and, finally, had invited disaster at the hands of a man who was an arch scoundrel.

"Here's the lad now."

An automobile of a celebrated make had entered the street and was coming toward the house. When it stopped at the curb, Trant saw that besides the blocky Harrison it contained a chauffeur and another man. Harrigan presented him with an inquiring look as he climbed into the car.

"This is Mr. Trant," O'Keefe explained. "Don't you remember stopping off at his apartment the other night? I'm stretching a point and taking him along with us because he's vitally interested in being in at the finish. He's got reason to believe that Sanford's holding a—a friend of his up there at his hang-out."

The blocky detective nodded amiably and introduced Trant to the other two in the car. The motor purred off as O'Keefe stretched himself out comfortably on the back seat.

"Tell us about this Mrs. Millam lady. What happened down at the Prince Charles?"

"Nothing much," Harrigan replied laconically. "I put a plant at the door to make sure she wouldn't blow and got her maid up. She said her mistress would dress and see me. She dressed all right, but she tried her best not to see me. I grabbed her just as she was trying the old in-and-out door stunt. She didn't want to talk, but I soon showed her the error of her ways and she came through fine. I left her with Walton. Mrs. Millam—that's a hot one. Guess who she really is? I mean outside of being Sanford's wife and ninety percent better half?"

"I haven't any idea," O'Keefe replied. "Who is she?"

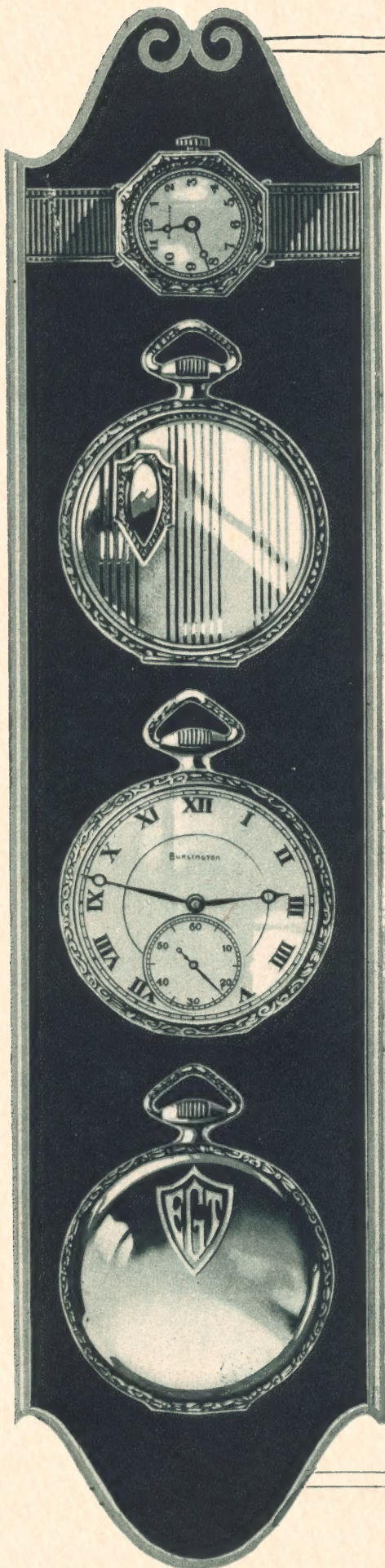
Harrigan grinned.

"A certain little chorus lady, who has been mixed up in one or two affairs of this kind before. Previous to getting hooked up to Sanford, she used another name—was known around town as Nellie Adair. Remember?"

Trant looked up quickly.

Nellie Adair!

Concluded Next Week



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